

**NOT WITHOUT THE HIGHEST JUSTICE : THE ORIGINS  
AND DEVELOPMENT OF THOMAS REID'S POLITICAL  
THOUGHT**

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1994



## Declaration

The opening portion of Chapter 7 has previously appeared in my "'Cadgers are ay speaking of Crooksadles': The Rediscovered Letters of Thomas Reid to Drs Andrew and David Skene," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 314 (1993):207–229.

This thesis has been composed by myself and the work on which it is based is my own.



## Acknowledgments

I should like to acknowledge the general and technical advice relating to my transcription of Reid's lectures on politics and to my use of the student notes given me by Richard Bellamy, David Fate Norton, Knud Haakonssen, Nicholas Phillipson and M.A. Stewart. I should also like to acknowledge the special assistance in connection with my work on Reid's papers which I received from Iain Beaven, Alan W. Bellringer, Dorothy Johnston, Alex Liddell, Colin A. McLaren, Murray Simpson and Eric Wm Skopec.

I am grateful to the following scholars for their assistance: John W. Cairns, Peter John Diamond, Roger L. Emerson, James Moore, J.C. Stewart-Robertson, H. Lewis Ulman, Paul Wood. I am also grateful to the staffs of the following institutions: Aberdeen City Archives; Aberdeen University Library; Bodleian Library; British Library; Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue; Edinburgh Central Public Library; Edinburgh District Council Archives; Edinburgh University Library; Glasgow University Archives; Glasgow University Library; Library of Parliament, Canada; Mitchell Library; National Library of Canada; National Library of Scotland; New College Library, University of Edinburgh; Ottawa University Library; Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh; Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh; Royal College of Surgeons of England; Royal Faculty of Procurators; Royal Museum of Scotland; Scottish Catholic Archives; Scottish Record Office; Signet Library.

Most of the research for this dissertation was carried out while the author held an Edinburgh University Postgraduate Studentship and an ORS (Overseas Research Student) Award and I should therefore like to record my thanks to the relevant authorities for their generous financial assistance.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the support both moral and material which I received from Mr and Mrs P.J. Todkill. Anne Todkill Kitagawa has been with me all along, as has Emily Frances Kitagawa, once she got here.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a full account of the origins and development of Thomas Reid's political thought. Its central argument is that the political thought of Reid's mature years was the inescapable result of a long-standing confrontation with Humean scepticism, in which he steadfastly strove to reassert the Moderate Christian principles he had imbibed in his youth and which he articulated most fully in his common-sense philosophy.

This conclusion is based largely on manuscript evidence. The surviving lecture notes on politics from Reid's moral philosophy course at Glasgow College are here transcribed and presented for the first time, having been painstakingly reconstructed on the basis of internal evidence and by means of close comparison with surviving lecture notes taken down by Reid's students. Before the present author conducted his research, none of the student material, amounting to several manuscript volumes, had been systematically transcribed. One set of student notes particularly rich in politics material was completely unknown to previous scholars.

In addition to drawing upon this manuscript record, this dissertation attempts to reconstruct the content of Reid's early intellectual formation as this pertains to the later development of his teaching on politics. Part 1 traces the origins and development of Reid's political thought from his early tuition under George Turnbull at Marischal College, Aberdeen and examines his philosophical development while he was librarian of Marischal and minister of the parish of New Machar. Part 2 continues the analysis of the progress of Reid's thinking during his days as regent of philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen. Part 3 concludes the argument by exploring the successive changes that Reid made to his political teaching while he was professor at Glasgow, i.e. at a late stage of his encounter with Hume's political science and Adam Smith's jurisprudence.

The result of this encounter was the development of a neo-Ciceronean, Christian political jurisprudence that was proof against Hume's Machiavellian politics and Smith's restrictive definition of justice, which excluded the performance of duties of humanity. In developing his own framework for a jurisprudence, Reid was forced to re-evaluate the modern natural law tradition of Grotius and Pufendorf, and the other Scottish alternatives to that tradition, namely the jurisprudence of Gershom Carmichael and Francis Hutcheson.

At the centre of Reid's political jurisprudence was a newly conceived science of politics formulated as a science of the highest prudence in which the restriction of property rights was tied to the dictates of conscience and in which the possession of common sense and a dedication to the pursuit of virtue were the minimum qualifications of membership in a political body. This new science of politics was premised on a philosophical concept of power and underwritten by a rigorous account of free will. This groundwork was designed to shore up the foundations of moral accountability and human agency which had been undermined by Hume's scepticism and, in Reid's critique, by Hume's necessitarianism.

Reid's political jurisprudence also incorporated a Montesquieuian treatment of the denaturing effects of political constitutions. This must be regarded as a sceptical concession to Hume on the question of custom and habit.

The Epilogue reviews Reid's achievement as a political philosopher, tracing the hitherto unappreciated relationship between his lectures on politics and his published discussions on ethics in the *Active Powers*. It is the conclusion of this author that Reid provided a coherent alternative to the politico-jurisprudential teachings of Hume and Smith, although he failed to carry a full expression of the political jurisprudence articulated in the classroom into print.

# Abbreviations

## Institutions

AUL	ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
BL	BRITISH LIBRARY
EUL	EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
GUA	GLASGOW UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
GUL	GLASGOW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ML	MITCHELL LIBRARY
NLS	NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND
RCSE	ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND [Library]
SCA	SCOTTISH CATHOLIC ARCHIVES
SRO	SCOTTISH RECORD OFFICE

## Reid Material

Birkwood Collection	AUL MSS. 2131/1–8. (As the prefix 2131, and the location, AUL, are common to all of the papers in this collection, these elements are omitted from all references to this material.)
<i>Philosophical Orations</i>	"The Philosophical Orations of Thomas Reid Delivered at Graduation Ceremonies in King's College, Aberdeen, 1753, 1756, 1759, 1762," trans. Shirley M.L. Darcus; ed. D.D. Todd, <i>Philosophy Research Archives</i> 3 (1977): 916–990.
<i>Practical Ethics</i>	<i>Practical Ethics</i> , ed. Knud Haakonssen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
<i>Works</i>	<i>The Works of Thomas Reid</i> , 3rd ed., ed. William Hamilton (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1852 [1846]). (The first five editions are identical; all eight editions are identical up to page 914 (aside from prefatory material), having been stereotyped. Material added or salvaged from Hamilton's notes by H.L. Mansel in the sixth (1863) and subsequent editions does not affect the pagination of the earlier material.)

## Prologue

The subject of this dissertation is the political thought of Thomas Reid, who was Adam Smith's successor as professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow College. It has long been known that in his public course Reid lectured not only on the "intellectual and active powers of man," i.e. the areas in which he published and for which he is most remembered today, but also on "practical ethics, ... natural jurisprudence, and the fundamental principles of politics", subjects on which he committed almost nothing to print.<sup>1</sup> It was undoubtedly this circumstance which led Gladys Bryson to conclude in the 1940s in her influential survey of the eighteenth-century Scottish philosophers that Reid

interested himself not at all in the problem's of man's past. He did not concern himself with the physical aspects of man's life; he did not write of domestic or political economy, of jurisprudence, of religion or of government. His range was limited to psychology and theoretical ethics, with a little attention given to aesthetics.<sup>2</sup>

Two important subsequent writers who pointed to the connection between Reid's pneumatology and his morals and politics partly corrected this view. Father Copleston, in his well-respected *History of Philosophy*, observed that "Reid and Stewart ... evidently regarded philosophy as of importance for man's ethical and political life".<sup>3</sup> Eric Voegelin also articulated this understanding of Reid in his *Anamnesis*: "The civilized *homo politicus* need not be a philosopher, but he must have common sense."<sup>4</sup>

While these isolated remarks have helped to restore a traditional appreciation of Reid's achievements, new textual scholarship has completely revolutionized our understanding of the range of Reid's speculations. Knud Haakonssen's edition of Reid's *Practical Ethics*, for example, has made available for the first time a transcription of Reid's hitherto unpublished lectures on natural jurisprudence.<sup>5</sup> My own edition of Reid's lectures on politics in Appendix 4 presents the first systematic

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<sup>1</sup>Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid," in *Works*, p. 10b.

<sup>2</sup>Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 5: *Hobbes to Hume* (London: Burns and Oates Ltd, 1964), p. 394.

<sup>4</sup>Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, trans. and ed. Gerhart Niemeyer (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), p. 212.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Reid, *Practical Ethics*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

transcription of the surviving manuscript lecture notes on this subject, which have been painstakingly reconstructed on the basis of internal evidence and by means of close comparison with surviving lecture notes taken down by Reid's students. Before the present author conducted his research, none of the student material, amounting to several manuscript volumes, had been systematically transcribed. One set of student notes particularly rich in politics material was completely unknown to previous scholars. The present study articulates fully the conception of politics to which earlier scholars had access only through hints and references scattered throughout Reid's published writings.

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a full account of the origins and development of Reid's political thought. Its central argument is that the political thought of Reid's mature years was the inescapable result of a long-standing confrontation with Humean scepticism, in which he steadfastly strove to reassert the Moderate Christian principles he had imbibed in his youth and which he articulated most fully in his common-sense philosophy.

In addition to drawing upon the manuscript record for the purpose of reconstructing the text of Reid's lectures on politics, this dissertation attempts to reconstruct the content of Reid's early intellectual formation as this pertains to the later development of his teaching on politics. Part 1 traces the origins and development of Reid's political thought from his early tuition under George Turnbull at Marischal College, Aberdeen and examines his philosophical development while he was librarian of Marischal and minister of the parish of New Machar. Part 2 continues the analysis of the progress of Reid's thinking during his days as regent of philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen. Part 3 concludes the argument by exploring the successive changes that Reid made to his political teaching while he was professor at Glasgow, i.e. at a late stage of his encounter with Hume's political science and Adam Smith's jurisprudence.

The result of this encounter was the development of a neo-Ciceronian, Christian political jurisprudence proof against Hume's Machiavellian politics and against Smith's restrictive definition of justice, which excluded the performance of duties of humanity. In developing his own framework for a jurisprudence, Reid was forced to re-evaluate the modern natural law tradition of Grotius and Pufendorf, and the other Scottish alternatives to that tradition, namely the jurisprudence of Gershom Carmichael and Francis Hutcheson.

At the centre of Reid's political jurisprudence was a newly conceived science of politics formulated as a science of the highest prudence in which the restriction of



property rights was tied to the dictates of conscience and in which the possession of common sense and a dedication to the pursuit of virtue were the minimum qualifications of membership in a political body. This new science of politics was premised on a philosophical concept of power and underwritten by a rigorous account of free will. This groundwork was designed to shore up the foundations of moral accountability and human agency which had been undermined by Hume's scepticism and, in Reid's critique, by Hume's necessitarianism. The only science worthy of the name for Reid was one that incorporated both a proper understanding of the nature of power and a coherent doctrine of accountability. For Reid, these intellectual objectives could only be achieved on the assumption that the human will is genuinely free.

Reid's political jurisprudence also incorporated a Montesquieuian treatment of the denaturing effects of political constitutions. This must be regarded as a sceptical concession to Hume on the question of custom and habit, albeit one which was used to support an essentially anti-Humean notion of human perfectibility.

The Epilogue reviews Reid's achievement as a political philosopher, tracing the hitherto unappreciated relationship between his lectures on politics and his published discussions on ethics in the *Active Powers*. It is the conclusion of this author that Reid provided a coherent alternative to the politico-jurisprudential teachings of Hume and Smith. Although it is true that Reid failed to carry a full expression of the political jurisprudence articulated in the classroom into print, a close study of the relevant manuscript material reveals that Reid's political thought was never very far from his reflections on pneumatology and ethics. Indeed, his politics lecture notes may be demonstrated to be the direct source of a number of significant passages in the published works. When considered together, the published and unpublished writings on pneumatology, ethics and politics may be seen to form a unified reply to the consuming scepticism of David Hume.

## PART I

### REID AS STUDENT AND MINISTER

In Part I I shall trace Reid's intellectual formation and the development of his moral and political thought from his boyhood days through his first career as minister of the parish of New Machar.

In Chapter 1 I shall deal with Reid's education, starting with what is known about the first instruction he received, progressing through his philosophical training under George Turnbull and his studies for the ministry under Thomas Blackwell.

The intellectual world of the 1720s had been transformed by the rise of daring new forms of scepticism. Locke had disputed the existence of innate ideas and Berkeley had denied the existence of a material world. Turnbull resisted the ascendancy of such sceptical hypotheses. In his philosophy course he introduced the young Reid to the Newtonian analogy between the government of the material and moral worlds and advocated the application of the same method of analysis and synthesis to both. Such a technique was intended to generate a genuine knowledge of the mind in all of its richness, free from the distortions caused by the admission of sceptical hypotheses. Turnbull also acquainted his students with certain problems in the modern natural law tradition, which was constantly under threat from scepticism, whether Carneadean or Hobbesian.

Orthodox Calvinism itself contained its own sceptical tendencies in its claims for the essential unknowability of characters and its denial of a connection between works and destiny. Turnbull and Blackwell replied with a rational Christianity that emphasized the formation of moral character and the pursuit of virtue as an empirically signposted route to salvation. Turnbull's emphasis on virtue was republican in its orientation and it was Turnbull's godly republicanism that Reid imbibed when he was a student at Marischal College.

In Chapter 2 I shall follow Reid's activities and interests while he was librarian of Marischal, including his participation in a philosophical club in the winter of 1736–1737 and the intellectual outcome of a year-long sojourn in England.



Here Reid himself entered sceptical debate. In the Club, Reid and his fellow members discussed among other things Hutcheson's theory of the passions and the question of the liberty of human actions. Hutcheson had conceived his theory as a response to the sceptical views advanced by Mandeville. Reid was evidently impressed by the Club's discussion of Hutcheson's theory, for he would begin his own very informed exchange of "Sentiments about the frame of the human Nature and the Origin of its Passions and Affections" with an unidentified gentleman of sceptical views in London during his visit to that city and would return to the question of the passions a year or two later.<sup>1</sup> This discussion raised the issue of belief and probability and led to an account of the encouragement of virtue, as I will demonstrate in my account of Reid's discussion of hope and fear. I will also consider Reid's engagement with the question of free will versus determinism, in which he struggled against necessitarianism, or fatalism, as Reid called it.

In Chapter 3 I will consider the politically significant aspects of Reid's thought in the period when he was preaching at New Machar. At the time Reid returned to the question of belief and probability implicit in the debate on the passions. Butler had educated moral certainty out of probability in order to answer the fatalists on the question of the liberty of human actions, attempting to navigate between certainty and probability with the aid of Butler even before Hume had published his *Treatise* of 1739. Reid thus had Butler's arguments at his disposal at an early stage of his efforts to counter Hume's Pyrrhonian attack on probability in Book 1 of the *Treatise*. Reid's subsequent resurrection of Epictetus may be regarded as an attempt to underwrite opinion in the wake of the devastation caused by Mandeville's sceptical reaction to hypocrisy and Hume's more subtle efforts to undermine belief. Reid ended up turning to Xenophon's account of shaping opinion as a response to what he evidently perceived to be the political consequences of the sceptical assault on belief. This appeal to Xenophon avoided the withdrawal from politics advocated by Epictetus and foreshadowed the systematic reflection on politics that would be required of Reid when he took up his teaching duties at King's College.

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<sup>1</sup>MS. 3/III/17, fo. 1r.

## Chapter 1

### Learning Moderate Morals: The Legacy of Turnbull

Reid was born on 26 April 1710 at the manse of Strachan in the country parish of Kincardineshire, situated about twenty-three miles from Aberdeen on the north side of the Grampian mountains. His father, the Revd Lewis Reid, was minister there for fifty years and was himself from a long line of clergymen, beginning with James Reid, the first minister of Banchory-Ternan after the Reformation. Reid's mother, Margaret Gregory, came from a family that contributed no less than fourteen professors to British universities through three centuries. One of her brothers, David, was Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford and a close friend of Newton. Her uncle, James, another friend of Newton, was professor of mathematics first at St Andrews and then at Edinburgh and is best known as the inventor of the reflecting telescope.

Reid probably received his first instruction at the manse, but was sent to the parish school in neighbouring Kincardine-O'Neil for his elementary education. In 1718 or 1719, the young Reid left for the Grammar School at Aberdeen. Very little is known about Reid or his intellectual development in this period, other than the parish schoolmaster's prophetic assessment that the twelve-year-old Reid "'would turn out to be a man of good and well-wearing parts'".<sup>1</sup> The broad outlines of the next phase of Reid's education are considerably better known.

Reid entered Marischal College, Aberdeen in October 1722 at the age of twelve. There he worked his way through the standard four-year arts course, studying under George Turnbull, one of the regents of philosophy. Turnbull led the young Reid through Greek in the first year and the different parts of philosophy in years 2–4, (i.e. logic in the second year, ethics in the third and physics or natural philosophy in the fourth) and presented him for graduation on 14 April 1726. It should be pointed out, however, that before the start of classes in Reid's final year, Turnbull went to study with the Huguenot Jean Barbeyrac (1674–1744) in Groningen. Accordingly, Reid received instruction from Turnbull's substitute, probably Robert Duncan, a former student of Barbeyrac newly returned from Groningen, for the first half of the 1725–1726

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid," in *Works*, p. 4b.

session.<sup>2</sup> But it was Turnbull who, in fact, taught Reid moral philosophy, including natural jurisprudence.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to realize the extent of Reid's indebtedness to Turnbull and the influence of the arts curriculum on his own intellectual formation and in his own career as a professor in the Scottish system in which he himself had been trained, notwithstanding his own reported view that his education under Turnbull had been "slight and superficial",<sup>4</sup> and the fact that he nowhere acknowledged any intellectual debt to Turnbull (a fact long ago noticed by James McCosh).<sup>5</sup>

The evidence that has been handed down to us of Turnbull's prelections during his brief career at Aberdeen is admittedly not very satisfying. But from the theses<sup>6</sup> published for Turnbull's graduating classes of 1723 and 1726 and from his *Principles of Moral Philosophy* (although this was not published until 1740)<sup>7</sup> it is possible to form a fairly clear picture of the kind of philosophical training Reid received and the sorts of problems to which he had been exposed while a student at Marischal. A third text, *A Philosophical Enquiry Concerning the Connexion betwixt the Doctrines and Miracles of Jesus Christ*, written in 1726 (but not published until 1731), may help to fill out the picture of what Turnbull actually taught, although Turnbull nowhere identified this work as being directly connected with his prelections.

I shall begin by considering the contemporary evidence afforded by Turnbull's two graduation theses, *Theses philosophicae de scientiae naturalis cum philosophia morali*

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<sup>2</sup>See M.A. Stewart, "George Turnbull and Educational Reform," in Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock, eds, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>It must be noted, too, that by the time Reid entered, the eminent Liddell Professor of Mathematics Colin M'Laurin had effectively stopped teaching at Marischal. Moreover, Reid would not encounter the Principal and Professor of Divinity Thomas Blackwell, author of *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*, until he began his studies for the ministry at Marischal in October 1726.

<sup>4</sup>Stewart, "Account," p. 4b.

<sup>5</sup>See James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1875), p. 104, n. 1.

<sup>6</sup>I.e. statements of doctrine published by a professor at the expense of his students, from which candidates for laureation would choose topics of disputation to demonstrate their command of the professor's teaching.

<sup>7</sup>Turnbull indicated in the Preface to the *Principles* that the book "[was] (a few things taken from late writers excepted) the substance of several pneumatological discourses, (as they are called in the school language) read above a dozen years ago to students of Moral Philosophy, by way of preparative to a course of lectures, on the rights and duties of mankind" (London, p. [13]). Volume 2 (London, 1740), entitled *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*, may or may not have originated in his prelections; he tells us in the Preface to this work only that his purpose in writing it was "to compleat the scheme of moral philosophy there delineated" (in the *Principles*).

*conjunctione* (1723) and *Theses academicae de pulcherrima mundi cum materialis tum rationalis constitutione* (1726).

In the theses for 1723 on the connection of natural and moral philosophy, Turnbull began by asserting that only by pursuing the method of analysis and synthesis and avoiding hypotheses in natural philosophy could the knowledge of nature be perfected.<sup>8</sup> Here Turnbull alluded to Bacon's advocacy of the experimental method, but his understanding of this method obviously derived from Query 31 of Newton's *Opticks* ("And if Natural Philosophy, in all its Parts, by pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will also be enlarged"),<sup>9</sup> for, he continued,

Both the moral and physical worlds are equally directed by the benevolent reins and prudent hand for all time. And if there is such a completeness in the natural order, we ought to be able to extend it to a knowledge of men and their various faculties, dispositions, and organization; all things would seem to be one, and one source of power binds the sum of nature. Just so the ancients believed, and Cicero teaches us, how most beautifully all things throughout the whole of nature are integrated, harmonious, and regulated.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Turnbull perceived a regularity in the government of the moral and the material worlds that marked them as analogous contrivances of the Creator and envisaged the reduction of moral phenomena to an empirical science in much the same way that the phenomena of nature were being so reduced by Newton and his followers, including Edmond Halley and Bradley.<sup>11</sup> Indeed in the Preface to his *Principles*, he even seems to have subsumed moral science under the heading of the science of nature: "it is certain, that the order and symmetry of this inward part [the human mind] is in itself no less real and exact than that of the body. And that this moral anatomy is not only a part, but the most useful part of Natural Philosophy, rightly understood, is too evident to need any proof to those who will but take the trouble to consider what Natural Philosophy, in its full extent, must mean."<sup>12</sup> The linking of Bacon and Newton with

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. Preface to *Principles*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>In fact Turnbull used this passage as an epigraph on the title-page of the *Principles*.

<sup>10</sup>Cited in Peter John Diamond, "The Ideology of Improvement: Thomas Reid and the Political Thought of the Scottish Enlightenment" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1986), p. 59.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. *Principles*, vol. 2, p. 10: "there is a perfect analogy between the government of the natural world, and that of the moral, as far as the natural differences of the two allow; and therefore ... we ought to judge of and account for moral as for natural things." This is of course Alexander Pope's formula.

<sup>12</sup>Pp. [1]–2.

Cicero was one of the few synthetic steps that Reid himself would allow in his own, as we shall see, largely critical philosophy, and it is safe to assume that Reid borrowed this formula from Turnbull.

In the theses for 1726 on “the manifest evidences and signs of wisdom and good order in the moral as well as the natural world”,<sup>13</sup> Turnbull employed Newtonian physics to prove the existence of God and the immortality of the human soul and thereby brought the engines of natural science to bear against irreligion. As this is the domain of natural theology which is so important for understanding Turnbull’s religious orientation and jurisprudential teaching in this period, I shall devote a separate section to this subject. Turnbull also criticized Socrates for “[discouraging] inquiries into the structure of nature.”<sup>14</sup> Reid, for his part, would later pay Socrates the following rather backhanded compliment, which would appear to owe much to Turnbull’s censure of that philosopher: “Deservedly, therefore, is Socrates considered most wise who wittily derided the physics of his own age and preferred to philosophize about these matters not at all rather than factitiously and uselessly.”<sup>15</sup> The theses for 1726 also contained a recommendation for curriculum reform according to which natural philosophy would be taught before moral philosophy. Given the obvious similarities between Turnbull’s views on educational reform and Reid’s own proposals for reforming the curriculum at King’s, I shall consider this topic in more detail later.

Moreover, as Paul Wood has pointed out, the theses also show that Turnbull acquainted his students with the doctrines of both “the ‘ancient Atheists’” Anaximander, Democritus and Leucippus and “their modern counterparts” Hobbes, Spinoza and Toland. He also introduced them to the philosophies of Descartes, Locke and (probably) Berkeley among the moderns.<sup>16</sup> Hence we may suppose that Reid was exposed to such major controversies in contemporary philosophy as materialism, scepticism, and free will versus determinism. I shall consider Turnbull’s teaching on the last two topics in more detail in the following discussions of his natural theology and natural jurisprudence.

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<sup>13</sup>Preface to *Principles*, vol. 1, p. [13]; cf. Preface to vol. 2: “The design of The Principles of Moral Philosophy, &c. is, to reduce appearances or facts in the moral world to general laws, in the same manner that appearances in the natural world are reduced to general laws by natural philosophers; and by pointing out several wise and good final causes of those general laws, to vindicate the ways of God to man, and prove that order is kept in the moral as well as in the natural world.”

<sup>14</sup>McCosh, *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, pp. 938–939.

<sup>16</sup>See P.B. Wood, “Thomas Reid and the Scottish Enlightenment” [exhibition catalogue] (Toronto: Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, 1985), p. 2.



It will be evident that on Turnbull's view natural philosophy was the best introduction to moral philosophy, its methodology serving as a model for the study of moral phenomena and its completion being natural theology. Turnbull took a twofold approach to natural theology whereby the results of the analysis of physical and moral phenomena, which revealed God's providence in both the natural world on the one hand and the regularity of the mental and moral faculties on the other, was joined to a rigorous comparison of Christ's doctrines with his works, his teaching with regard to a future state "[being] subject to 'experimental proof' in this life, by those miracles which were 'natural proper samples' of the power they confirmed".<sup>17</sup> As Turnbull viewed the miracles of Christ as confirmation of his teaching, so in the same spirit his project in the *Principles* was to find evidence of general moral laws and thus "to vindicate the ways of God to man".<sup>18</sup> Turnbull's conviction that punishment and reward were meted out in due proportion (if not in this life then in the next) provided for him, as I shall demonstrate, the foundation for virtue, religion and political society.

It may be underlined here that Turnbull's theology, by emphasizing works and reason as well as faith and revelation, had a marked affinity with the Arminian doctrines that "there is an universal grace given to all men; [and] that man is always free, and at liberty to reject or embrace grace &c."<sup>19</sup> In these emphases natural theology attempted to mitigate the extremist interpretations of the Westminster Confession of Faith professed by Calvinist orthodoxy, the principal tenets of which were:

1st, That predestination and reprobation are prior to the prescience of good or evil works. 2dly, That predestination and reprobation depend on the mere will of God; without any regard to the merits or demerits of mankind. 3dly, That God gives to those whom he has predestinated, a faith which they cannot lose; a necessitating grace, which takes away the freedom of the will; and that he imputes no sin to them. 4thly, That the reprobates cannot do any good work, by reason of original sin, which cleaves to them. 5thly, That men are justified by faith only.<sup>20</sup>

Turnbull's Moderate leanings were evident in the assertion contained in the 1726 theses that "without divine grace no man can be good, pious, and upright." It was also apparent in his *Philosophical Enquiry*, where he asserted "that the Scripture way

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<sup>17</sup>*Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 14, cited in Stewart, "George Turnbull," p. 99.

<sup>18</sup>Preface to vol. 2.

<sup>19</sup>"Arminianism," *Cyclopædia*, ed. by E. Chambers, 7th ed., vol. 1 (London, 1751).

<sup>20</sup>"Calvinism," *Cyclopædia*.

of talking about the Spirit of God and his operations means simply assistance to the virtuous.”

The pedagogical (and ultimately political) implications of Turnbull’s valorization of reason over revelation and of works over faith are plain. Henceforth, the role of the preacher would be to teach morals rather than articles of faith; thus liberal education would replace “clerical authoritarianism” as a means to training youth in the ways of righteousness.<sup>21</sup>

Turnbull’s emphasis, implicit in this approach, on the importance of reason and works to salvation and the formation of moral character is consistent with his extensive use in the *Principles* of the sermons of another rationalist Christian, Samuel Clarke.

Especially significant is Turnbull’s use of Clarke’s Sermon 119 on Galatians 6.7, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Turnbull borrows Clarke’s interpretation of this verse, i.e. that there is “as close and regular a connexion in morals as in naturals” (i.e. natural phenomena).<sup>22</sup> For Clarke and Turnbull the analogy between the natural and the moral realms lay in the fact that fixed relationships of cause and effect could be ascribed to both. If the harvest depends upon the sower’s effort, so does our salvation depend upon our diligence in this life. In contradistinction to the orthodox Calvinist view, “consequences and connexions” in the moral realm are thus the fruits of freely willed action, not the preordained outcome of election.<sup>23</sup> The doctrine of predestination is here replaced by a doctrine “of Rewards and Punishments finally proportionable to men’s Behaviour”.<sup>24</sup> The certainty that “whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap” provides the very foundation for virtue and allows the possibility of moral self-improvement denied by the Calvinist understanding of the reprobate’s original sin. We are not moved about mechanically by divine decree, passive recipients of unearned grace, but are as Turnbull puts it “active being[s]” who make moral choices which have consequences for this life and the next.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Vol. 2, p. 7; cf. *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, 5th ed., vol. 2 (London, 1742), p. 27.

<sup>23</sup>*Principles*, loc. cit.; cf. Clarke, *Works*, loc. cit. About Turnbull’s use of the Newtonian language of *natural* consequences (the language of moral consequences was conceived as an analogue to this language), which Reid would appropriate in his remarks on politics both at King’s and at Glasgow College, more at the end of this section.

<sup>24</sup>Clarke, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup>Vol. 2, p. 40; cf. “Remarks”, in Jo[hann] Got[tlieb] Heineccius, *A Methodical System of Universal Law*, trans. George Turnbull, vol. 1 (London, 1763), p. 197: “intelligent active beings”.

According to Turnbull, “the assiduous study and practice of virtue”, the object of a liberal education, consists in “making the best use [we] can of all the seasons and circumstances [we] may now be placed in” through the enlightened exercise of reason.<sup>26</sup> It builds up moral character, giving us “dominion over ourselves, and ... inward liberty and power” and thereby affords the comforts of a clear conscience and secures our passage into heaven.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, “our present state is, with respect to a future life, a probationary state; a state of education, trial, and discipline; a state in which the foundation is laid for our after happiness or misery; or, to keep to the apostle’s [St Paul’s] excellent similitude, our seed-time, to which it is the harvest.”<sup>28</sup>

Virtue as conceived by the rationalists is not the static grace of the strict Calvinists but “is and must be a progress.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, “as it is virtue alone that can make any particular person truly happy; so it is virtue alone that can be called the basis and cement of society, or that makes it happy.”<sup>30</sup> Thus for theological, moral and political reasons, the practice of virtue “is our principal business in this our first state”.<sup>31</sup> Liberal education is on this model “the proper foundation of the virtues of citizenship and, by extension, of a political system of liberty.”<sup>32</sup>

It is clear, then, that under Turnbull’s tutelage Reid was launched on a trajectory of rational Christianity, one that would be confirmed by his training for the ministry and demonstrated by his own moderate stance in the Church and in his teaching on natural theology in Glasgow. Reid’s basic orientation on the question of free will would appear to owe much to Turnbull, and it is significant that it is the verse from Galatians, which, as we have seen, was such a favourite with Turnbull (and Clarke), that in many aspects sets the tone of Reid’s inaugural lecture at Glasgow. Moreover, the view that this life is a state of trial and improvement, which Reid would espouse to the end of his days, is a formula he learned from Turnbull. The notion that we are active

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<sup>26</sup>Vol. 2, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup>Vol. 1, p. 264.

<sup>28</sup>Vol. 2, pp. 9–10.

<sup>29</sup>Vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>30</sup>Vol. 1, p. 344.

<sup>31</sup>Vol. 1, p. 264.

<sup>32</sup>Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, p. 8; cf. *Principles*, vol. 2, p. 104: “Hence naturally pullulate suspicion, jealousy, envy, fraud, revenge, and many other monstrous vices, which sadly depress and sink men below the dignity they naturally rise to in a free state; where a spirit of liberty and independency, a sense of one common interest and public spiritedness, desire of aggrandizing the commonwealth, and of shining, gaining fame, honour, power, and dignity in it, by being eminently useful to it, must naturally grow up, as generous plants in their proper soil and climate; for there proper care of education, an essential point to free and happy government, cannot be wanting.”



beings and the emphasis on virtue in its theological, moral and political applications, so much in evidence in Turnbull, would also inform Reid's own teaching.

In the Preface to the *Principles* Turnbull indicated that in his moral philosophy course he read the pneumatological discourses (which he expanded in that work) as a "preparative to a course of lectures, on the rights and duties of mankind".<sup>33</sup> It may be noted that it was under this aspect that politics was handled. While Turnbull's lectures have not survived, the topics for disputation at the end of his 1726 theses give us something of an outline of his teaching.

Turnbull's jurisprudential orientation in 1724–1725 was, in Knud Haakonssen's formula, "a providential naturalism" according to which the results of an empirical investigation of human and non-human nature were taken to "show that there are things that are inherently good and bad, ... the supreme will disclosed by the providential order of the world ... [putting] man under a moral obligation to follow the laws of nature."<sup>34</sup>

Against the background sketched above, it is significant that in his 1723 theses Turnbull asserted that "the state of nature is not completely lawless" and that in the 1726 theses he claimed that "man is created for society". These theses were decidedly anti-Hobbesian. In his *Leviathan* Hobbes declared that

the Laws of Nature (as Justice, Equity, Modesty, Mercy, and (in summe) doing to others, as we would be done to,) of themselves without the terour of some Power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural Passions, that carry us to Partiality, Pride, Revenge, and the like.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly it was his view (according to Barbeyrac's influential interpretation) that "the Will of the Sovereign alone constitutes ... what we call Just and Unjust".<sup>36</sup>

I said earlier on that Turnbull's rational Christianity involved a shift away from what might be regarded as orthodox Calvinism's sceptical denial of the connection between one's works and one's fate, in favour of a scientific affirmation of moral causes and

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<sup>33</sup>Vol. 1, p. [13].

<sup>34</sup>Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>*Leviathan* (London, 1651), p. 85.

<sup>36</sup>*An Historical and Critical Account of the Science of Morality*, prefaced to S. Pufendorf, *The Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. Basil Kennett, 5th ed. (London, 1749), quoted in Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 93. Barbeyrac's *Historical and Critical Account* was first published in French in 1706.

effects. This ethico-theological orientation also informed Turnbull's teaching on natural jurisprudence. God must be presumed to have legislated even in the state of nature, as a third thesis from 1726 shows: "the right to do or not to do something derives as much from God as the similar obligation to do or not to do something". Turnbull's theocentric natural jurisprudence had important political consequences: "no natural rights can be contractually alienated, and in cases of the utmost necessity the individual has a right to the property of others".<sup>37</sup> Reid would adopt similar principles in his own natural jurisprudence, as I shall show in due course. I shall only say here that when Reid was teaching at Glasgow College he saw fit to separate politics from ethics, which included natural jurisprudence. This proved to be extremely difficult for him to do, precisely because he had been taught to view politics as an essential part of jurisprudence. What he ended up with was a political jurisprudence which incorporated his science of politics.

With this discussion of Turnbull's theses we have exhausted the evidence that has survived of what Reid learned about natural law from his regent at Marischal.<sup>38</sup> Although I have disregarded Turnbull's *Discourse upon the Nature and Origine of Moral and Civil Laws*,<sup>39</sup> which he described as "an attempt to introduce the experimental way of reasoning into morals, or to deduce human duties from internal principles and dispositions in the human mind",<sup>40</sup> and his translation of Heineccius' *Elementa juris naturae et gentium*,<sup>41</sup> I should point out that in the former he may be regarded as having prepared the way for Reid and in the translation (*Methodical System*) he confirmed the orientation contained in the theses.<sup>42</sup>

It is also significant that, just as he had done in the *Principles*, Turnbull used the Newtonian language of natural causes and consequences in the *Methodical System*, but this time specifically with regard to "our excellent politician Mr. Harrington".<sup>43</sup> While this discussion may not have formed part of Turnbull's course in 1724–1725, the following remarks, closely related to these, in the *Principles*, probably did:

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<sup>37</sup>Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, pp. 7–8; cf. *Methodical System*, vol. 1, p. 9 and n.

<sup>38</sup>I have deliberately not opened up the problem of the modern natural law tradition, which had ever been under pressure from the sceptics; I shall deal with this subject at length when I come to Reid's own teaching career at Glasgow.

<sup>39</sup>London, 1740.

<sup>40</sup>Preface to *Methodical System*.

<sup>41</sup>2 vols (London, 1741).

<sup>42</sup>See "Remarks", in *Methodical System*, vol. 1, pp. 62–63.

<sup>43</sup>"Remarks", vol. 1, pp. 200, 295, 296 ("property is the natural cause of government"); Preface to vol. 2, pp. 82, 119; cf. *Principles*, vol. 2, p. 6.

that the perfection and happiness of mankind must depend upon the natural fitness of the form of government they live under, or of their civil and religious constitution, in order to produce that end, is as certain as that there are proper and improper means with relation to any end; or that no end can be accomplished, but by the means fit to attain it: an universal self-evident truth in moral as well as natural mechanism, or with respect to moral ends as well as natural ones. In consequence of which it is that the science of politics consists in judging of the propriety and fitness, moral and political, of means to bring about and promote the sole end of government, the happiness of subjects. And hence it is accordingly that philosophers and politicians have been able, in many instances, to form such true judgments of the different forms of government, laws and policies, as (like Polybius, with regard to the Roman republic) to foretel the revolutions and changes of government which must happen, merely from the exact knowledge of the necessary effects of moral causes. Here, as well as in the natural world, effects may be with certainty inferred from their causes; for in both cases, from a certain concurrence of circumstances or causes, certain consequences necessarily result. To be satisfied of this, one needs only look into the political reasonings of any good writer on politics, Aristotle, Polybius, or our own Harrington.<sup>44</sup>

Reid would employ this same Newtonian language both in his philosophical orations at King's<sup>45</sup> and in his Glasgow lectures on politics<sup>46</sup> when it came to be his turn to teach. There can be no doubt that this was a language he had learned from Turnbull. Harrington would also figure prominently in Reid's Glasgow lectures, as I will show.

In the 1726 theses Turnbull recommended a reversal of the order in which the main parts of the philosophy course were dealt with. Traditionally in the Scottish universities, moral philosophy was taught before natural philosophy. This was the case at Marischal. For his part, Turnbull evidently regarded the study of natural philosophy as a prerequisite and model for the study of moral philosophy. In a few of his other writings published about the same time as the *Principles*, most notably *A Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1739) and *Observations upon Liberal Education* (1742), Turnbull developed his views on educational reform further. In these works he downplayed the importance of language and logic, the subjects that dominated the first two years of the arts course, and emphasized the value of early instruction in natural and civil history (which he apparently regarded as related both to each other and to natural religion in the same way that natural and moral philosophy were). If

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<sup>44</sup>Vol. 1, pp. 200–201.

<sup>45</sup>See pp. 938, 955.

<sup>46</sup>See MSS. 4/III/1, fo. 2r; 4/III/2, fo. 2r ("the various Forms of Political Government with their Causes & Effects"); cf. 4/III/5, fo. 1r.

Turnbull's practice with his private students is any indication, it would appear that he had these ideas in the back of his mind when he was teaching Reid.<sup>47</sup>

Be that as it may, Turnbull did not succeed in changing either the order or the content of the arts curriculum at Marischal. Moral philosophy continued to be taught before natural philosophy and independently of history until the 1750s. It is significant that it was Reid himself who would be the driving force behind the eventual reforms at King's and that these would be on the same lines as those suggested by Turnbull.

Thus far I have focussed on what is known about the structure of the education Reid received at Marischal and highlighted what may reasonably be assumed were the problems to which his attention had been drawn. It is to be regretted, however, that nothing in Reid's hand survives from his first four years at Marischal. Reid's Victorian biographer, A. Campbell Fraser, remarked somewhat plaintively that "A commonplace book like Berkeley's, when Berkeley was an undergraduate in Dublin, would have cast welcome light on this part of his mental history."<sup>48</sup>

In the event, all that we have relating to Reid's intellectual development in this formative teenage period is a letter which he wrote many years later to his kinsman William Gregory, then an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford. The letter, dated 13 January 1779, was written when Reid was in his 69th year and must, for that reason, be viewed with caution. The danger is great that the older Reid gazed upon his youth through an interpretative lens that was not part of his cognitive equipment as a boy. Bearing this in mind, we may consider Reid's revelation to young Gregory that when he was about fourteen (presumably Gregory's age) he was burdened by an overactive imagination. He was haunted by recurring bad dreams in which he found himself in a variety of perilous situations, and in the face of which he showed himself to be a terrible coward. As well as distressing him at night these nightmares disturbed him during the day. At about the same period, when the young Reid went for his evening walk he would indulge in what he, like Steele in *The Spectator*<sup>49</sup> called "castle-building", a species of day-dreaming, "and in these scenes of imagination [he] performed many a gallant exploit." Anxious to reconcile these conflicting images of

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<sup>47</sup>Turnbull's first act as tutor to a certain Master Udney in 1725 and to Andrew Wauchope of Niddry in 1727 was to enroll them in the history classes at Groningen and Edinburgh respectively (see Stewart, "George Turnbull," pp. 97–101).

<sup>48</sup>*Thomas Reid, Famous Scots Series* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1898), p. 24.

<sup>49</sup>No. 167 (11 Sept 1711).

himself, or at least to conquer his fears, Reid persevered in an exercise in mental discipline in which he “strongly impressed” upon his mind as he went to sleep the thought that he “never in [his] lifetime was in any real danger, and that every fright [he] had was a dream.” Apparently, he hoped that this thought would intervene when he was visited by a nightmare. The technique was successful, as it prompted him to wake up “calm and intrepid”, and subsequently Reid found that his “dreams were never very uneasy”. Within about a year or two, i.e. about the time he was completing his studies with Turnbull, he seems to have believed that he had stopped himself from having dreams altogether, a circumstance that remained true for more than forty years. The only dream he could distinctly remember came more than ten years even later and was occasioned by a fall.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, Reid does not say whether his tendency to day-dream was overcome when the dreams and nightmares stopped.

This reminiscence is significant because it affords a glimpse into what appears to be Reid’s attempt at a very early age to distinguish proper from improper uses of the imagination. This issue and the problem of characterizing the imagination adequately are themes that would recur in Reid’s later intellectual career, particularly in response to the sceptical challenge of Hume, and which would prove to have a direct political relevance, i.e. as an aid to the practice of virtue.<sup>51</sup> It is tempting to speculate that Reid engaged in his youthful exercises in mental discipline apropos of hearing Turnbull lecture on Locke’s notion of power, the act of will by which Reid stopped himself from dreaming being an application of Locke’s concept.<sup>52</sup>

Promoted by Turnbull, Reid graduated M.A. on 14 April 1726. The following October, still at Marischal, he began his studies for the ministry, which he completed in 1731 at the age of twenty or twenty-one. Reid was taught first by the Principal and Professor of Divinity, Thomas Blackwell, and, after Blackwell’s death in 1728, by James Chalmers, who succeeded Blackwell in the Divinity chair. In his published writings, Blackwell, who was a Moderate Presbyterian, condemned atheism, deism and the mysticism of Antoinette Bourignon, which was then popular among local Episcopalians. Blackwell made use of both reason and revelation in putting forward

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<sup>50</sup>Stewart, “Account,” pp. 33b–34a.

<sup>51</sup>See *Works*, p. 386a.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Turnbull, *Principles*, vol. 2, p. 73.



his own brand of rational Christianity, which, as Paul Wood has shown, was essentially in line with that advocated by Turnbull.<sup>53</sup>

Tradition has it that Reid was “master of Sir Isaac Newton’s *Principia* at the age of twenty.”<sup>54</sup> Reid was obviously delving into natural philosophy while he was studying for the ministry, and, as I have already observed, Turnbull would have regarded this as an ideal preparation for a proper natural theology. The methodological model provided by Newton’s *Principia* furnished Reid with the notion of a cause and the language of necessary consequences that would later inform his forays into the science of politics at both Aberdeen and Glasgow. It also gave him an early demonstration of the fundamental importance of probable evidence to the affairs of everyday life, from the most mundane to those of the greatest consequence, including politics and religion.

On 22 September 1731 Reid was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Kincardine O’Neil and began a long career that would be divided between church and university, fulfilling the promise of both sides of his family. Reid served as Clerk of the Presbytery and preached occasionally from August 1732 to April 1733.

In July 1733, Reid left his church duties temporarily to become Librarian of Marischal College, a post which he held until 1738, but which he in fact handed over to a substitute in 1736 in order that he and his childhood friend, John Stewart, who was by that time professor of mathematics at Marischal, could sojourn in England for a year among the scientific (broadly defined) literati of London, Oxford and Cambridge.

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<sup>53</sup>P.B. Wood, “Thomas Reid,” p. 3; see also M.A. Stewart, “George Turnbull,” p. 99; P.J. Diamond, “The Ideology of Improvement,” p. 29.

<sup>54</sup>*The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1796*, 2nd ed., vol. 38 (London, 1807), p. 39. The same remark appeared in *The Gentlemen’s Magazine, or Monthly Intelligencer*, vol. 66 (1796), p. 883. There is a six-page manuscript among Reid’s papers in Aberdeen (7/III/15) headed on fo. 1r “Cum Principia Mathematica Cl. Newtoni”, and dated on the same folio 6 Oct 1729 (i.e. in Reid’s twentieth year).

## Chapter 2

### Connecting Power with Passion: An Early Encounter with Locke

Throughout the 1730s, Reid closely monitored the contemporary debates on liberty and power and on the passions. These issues had been given particular urgency by the resurgence of scepticism. Turnbull and Aberdeen philosophy had evidently awakened his interest in this side of things, for Reid seems to have spent his time both while he was a librarian and a cleric in intensive study, not only of “the laws of external perception, and of the other principles which form the groundwork of human knowledge”, as Dugald Stewart observed,<sup>1</sup> but also of theologico-political problems. I shall begin in this chapter with Reid’s progress on these subjects while he held the patronage appointment of librarian at Marischal. In the next chapter I will consider Reid’s engagement during his years as a minister with these and other philosophical matters which would have profound implications for his political science.

The first extant manuscripts relating to this stage of Reid’s intellectual career are those surrounding his sojourn in England and were written while Reid was in his mid-twenties. Only about half a dozen manuscripts pertinent to my discussion have survived from 1736–1737, but these contain a wealth of material on the state of Reid’s knowledge at this time and on the nature of his engagement with the controversies that raged in moral philosophy in his day. Although none of the reflections recorded in these documents are expressly political, in many ways they point the way to the 1766 version of his introductory lecture on politics at Glasgow, and beyond to his philosophical correspondence with Lord Kames and with his kinsman, Dr James Gregory, from 1772 to 1793.

In the winter of 1736 Reid was active in a philosophical club at Aberdeen whose membership probably included John Stewart, whom we have mentioned before, and David Fordyce, a student of Hutcheson who later taught philosophy at Marischal. The Club met at frequent intervals to discuss the leading theological and philosophical texts of the day. Reid’s brief minutes record meetings in January on the 12th, 19th and 26th and in February on the 4th and the 9th. The texts discussed

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<sup>1</sup>“Account,” in *Works*, p. 5b.

on those occasions included, it would seem, Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and the publications of Francis Hutcheson, including his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*,<sup>2</sup> the Clarke–Leibniz correspondence and William King's *De Origine Mali*.<sup>3</sup> The Club set for discussion questions concerning God's active role in "the Course of Nature", the divine government of moral agents through law, "Duration, Eternity, Succession of Ideas &c", the principles of human nature, and self-love and benevolence. The Club's discussion of Hutcheson's theory of the passions evidently impressed Reid, for he would begin his own very informed exchange of "Sentiments about the frame of the human Nature and the Origin of its Passions and Affections" with an unidentified gentleman of sceptical views in London during his visit to that city, and would return to the question of the passions a year or two later, after his return to Scotland, in his correspondence with the same man.<sup>4</sup> But for present purposes the single most important topic dealt with by the Club (i.e. on the basis of the surviving minutes) was the question proposed concerning the liberty of human actions.

This question, like that concerning the passions, had great currency among philosophers of the day. In the debate on human liberty, two basic positions were available: a belief in our own liberty and power or a retreat into fatalism. Thus in the Philosophical Club Reid was anxious to combat the views of "The fatalists [who] either Suppose that the Mind is Determined either by the greatest apparent Good or by the Strongest present Desire or Uneasiness", and he agreed with Locke that "the Strongest Desire [is] not always raised by the greatest apparent good". He also contended that we are not slaves of our desires but are in fact "perswaded that we are the Authors of our Own Actions". We have a notion of "willing an Action", "a Power of Deliberation" and indeed "a Power of Suspending action or acting Contrary to Desire or Instinct". We have, in a word, "Liberty".<sup>5</sup>

Hume and Kames would declare our notions of liberty and power to be deceitful and would resort to a form of fatalism in consequence. This would become a matter of contention for Reid in his lectures on ethics during his tenure at Aberdeen, as I will show in Chapter 5. Reid would again take up the question of human liberty when he

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<sup>2</sup>Reid has "treatise on the Passions." For his notes from Hutcheson's book, see MS. 7/V/24, fos 1r, 2r.

<sup>3</sup>See fos 1v–2r for direct and indirect references to authors and/or texts.

<sup>4</sup>MS. 3/III/7, fo. 1r.

<sup>5</sup>MS. 6/I/17, fos 1v–2r.



rewrote the opening lecture on politics for his class in Glasgow in 1766. This issue would also occupy a crucial position in his *Essays on the Active Powers* published in 1788, where the nature of Reid's politics is only thinly disguised in the pedagogical format of Essay 4, "Of the Liberty of Moral Agents." While I can make no claim here that Reid had politics on his mind when he and his colleagues were conversing on liberty in the Philosophical Club a full thirty years before, in his Glasgow lectures Reid would draw upon a stock of knowledge he had begun to acquire under Turnbull and to which he had added in the 1730s and beyond. Still, the difficulties implicit in disposing of the same business first in an ethical context and then under the rubric of politics are not to be underestimated.

Reid's strategy in allowing our persuasion of certain principles to be the starting-point of his philosophy is striking, for it recalls Cicero's view that what is persuasive can be a reason for action.<sup>6</sup> This was consistent with the eminently practical nature of Reid's philosophy. It would hardly be thoroughgoing enough, however, to satisfy the consummate sceptic, Hume, who would subject persuasion or probability to his Pyrrhonian scrutiny and challenge such persuasions as mere prejudice.

The claim made here that the discussion about liberty that was taking place in the Philosophical Club was of central importance to Reid's intellectual activity at this time is supported by other manuscript evidence. While the Club was meeting and in the period immediately before and after that covered by Reid's minutes, Reid was writing out "Definitions of some Words relating to our Active powers"<sup>7</sup> and posing the question "Willing what".<sup>8</sup> These papers must be read in conjunction with a third document headed "Quær. Whether Men in all their Actions are Determined Necessarily or Not", which probably dates from the second week of January 1736.<sup>9</sup> Reid begins this discussion with the assertion that our ideas of power and agency are primary notions which can be explained only by the fact that "There are certain Events or Effects of which we Imagine our Selves to be the Authors and that it was in our Power that they Should not have been." By "Willing" one determines to produce an effect "And the Sum of all the Effects which depend upon [one's] willing them is the Measure of [one's] Power". Reid called this "Natural Power" and

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. *On Duties*, ed. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 5 and n. 2. Of R and Cicero more later.

<sup>7</sup>MS. 6/1/34, which bears the dates 11 and 13 Jan 1736.

<sup>8</sup>MS. 6/1/35, which is dated 19 Feb 1736.

<sup>9</sup>MS. 3/III/1.

claimed it "is the Same which Mr Locke in his excellent Chapter on Power [i.e. *Essay* Book 2, Chapter 21] calls Liberty". Natural Power must, however, be distinguished from "Mechanical" powers, which produce their effects not through the mediation of will but by the operation of "Natural Instincts or ... acquired Habits".<sup>10</sup>

It is this concept of natural power which turns out to be essential to a proper understanding of Reid's politics. Some thirty years after the date of this piece, Reid would in the general introduction to his moral philosophy course at Glasgow characterize "Political Events" as "the grandest Effects of human Power ... [i.e. those] that are produced by the concurrence of many joyned in Society."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it is significant that Reid should have been interested in legitimizing the concept of power in 1736, i.e. three years before Hume had boldly shown that "We never ... have any idea of power" in Book 1 of the *Treatise of Human Nature*.<sup>12</sup> It is almost as though Reid felt the tide of scepticism coming in and then immediately set about shoring up the foundations of the human mind. He had certainly been prepared for this, at least in a rudimentary fashion, by Turnbull. But, as I will show, despite his continuing interest in the problems of liberty and power, Reid would not spontaneously develop a systematic response to the sceptics. Rather, the demands of teaching would concentrate his interest and call forth a disciplined reply.

In the spring of 1736 Reid travelled with John Stewart to London, Oxford and Cambridge to "See men and things". Sponsored by Dr Alexander Stuart, who was presumably John Stewart's kinsman, Reid and Stewart witnessed some electrical experiments demonstrated by J.T. Desaguliers at the Royal Society. While still in London, Reid and Stewart were introduced to Martin Folkes, perhaps through Reid's relation to Dr David Gregory. Dugald Stewart tells us that Folkes' "house concentrated the most interesting objects which the metropolis had to offer to his curiosity."<sup>13</sup> At Cambridge Reid and Stewart conversed with the blind Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, Dr Nicholas Saunderson.

The evidence that has survived shows us that at this period Reid was also following with interest a debate concerning the passions, which involved Hutcheson,

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<sup>10</sup>Fo. 1r.

<sup>11</sup>MS. 7/V/4, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed., ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; hereinafter *Treatise*), p. 161.

<sup>13</sup>"Account," in *Works*, p. 5a.

Mandeville and, latterly, Hume. It was at this time that Reid and his sceptical London acquaintance began their exchange of opinions on this subject. By Reid's summary, his friend took the view "that The Love of Sensible Pleasure is the Onely Principle that is truly Natural & Original to us". It was of course a good sceptical strategy to "mount higher," as Hume would later describe the process, and trace every passion through its antecedents, which we have in common with the brutes, to its earliest, untutored, appearance in the human mind. Children, and adults in their savage condition, afford natural models for this task, and the results of the investigation could then be generalized to explain the motivations of people in advanced commercial society. On this view, accounting for the great variety of animating principles in the human frame was merely an interpretative problem which could be easily met in any given case by showing how different passions are excited or extinguished through the modification or recombination of the first stirrings from which they ultimately derive. Thus Reid noted his sceptical friend's admission

That there are several Other Principles in Grown Men such as the Love of Honour, Riches, Virtue, Affection to the Good of our friends, Of our Countrey or of Mankind. That we seek these things at first onely as the Means of procuring Sensible Good to us but when by long Experience we have found them Closely Connected with sensible Good, the Ideas of them come at last to be so associated with the Idea of Good that we acquire an esteem of them or an affection to them as good in themselves.

Yet Reid's interlocutor seems to have been of the opinion that because the love of honour, benevolent affection and all of the other affections are engendered by the love of sensible pleasure, they "may be strengthened weakned or quite extinguished by Custom Education or Discipline."

For his part, Reid was willing to allow that the love of sensible pleasure is probably "the onely Principle that operates in infants for some time", but he was unhappy with the suggestion that the other principles (the love of honour, benevolent affection, and so on), which, admittedly, are not apparent in infancy, are merely assimilated to sensible pleasure by the association of ideas in adulthood. Such a belief, he considered, degraded human nature and gave too much credit to the reductionist argument of the sceptics. Reid was rather of the view that these other principles are equally natural and original to human beings, although nature is obviously quite "[frugal] in bestowing them onely at that period of life when we come to have use for them." The "Passion of Shame", for example, appears relatively late,

presumably because it is not useful to us earlier on.<sup>14</sup> But nature does not do everything, in Reid's view; we must raise the passions properly through use and exercise, the unstated assumption being that if nature has not planted the seed, there would be nothing for us either to cultivate or to tread under foot. Thus Reid's argument with his sceptical friend boils down to how one is to interpret nature's apparent flexibility where the passions are concerned. The sceptics preferred to account for it by regarding principles such as the love of honour as offshoots of a single plant sprouted, as it were, by ratiocinative or calculating reason, whereas Reid chose to characterize them as late bloomers in the richly varied garden of human faculties.

In another contemporary note on this subject, Reid indicated the extent to which he believed the passions to be absolutely necessary constituents of the mind. Indeed, he seems to have regarded them as a kind of switching-box in the interface between "the powers of Understanding & [of] Action". If the mind were "without any feeling of Pleasure or Pain happiness or Misery," Reid supposed,

there could be no possible reason or motive to determine it to any one course of Action more than another, it must forever be irresolute & inconstant[;] if not wholly inactive incapable of moral Government & Virtue or Vice as well as of Reward or Punishment.<sup>15</sup>

This characterization of the mind would prove to be fraught with difficulties, for it was tantamount to an admission that the passions are the decisive factor in human conduct. From this position it is, of course, fairly easy to slide into the view that Hume would reach, i.e. that reason is perfectly inert. Reid does not seem to have been cognizant of such dangers at this point, but it is clear that when he did eventually become aware of them he back-pedalled vigorously, insisting that there are in fact rational principles of action which are (or at least can be) quite compelling in those who have had the proper training and discipline. Nonetheless, at no time did Reid try to discount entirely the role of the passions in inciting us to action. On the contrary, he seems to have persisted for the rest of his days in the view, outlined in the next section, that the way to shape a man's behaviour is by operating on his passions.

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<sup>14</sup>MSS. 3/III/7, fo. 1r; 6/I/33, fo. 1r. 3/III/7 is a draft of a letter from Reid to an unknown correspondent in London dating from 1737 or early 1738. In the letter Reid introduces his friend David Fordyce to his London acquaintance. 6/I/33 appears to be a minute of Reid's conversation with his London friend, or at least a sketch of his friend's position, together with a statement of his own view.

<sup>15</sup>MS. 6/I/29, fo. 1r; cf. MS. 7/V/8, fo. 2r, evidently of a later date.

Although Reid, as we have seen, was at some pains to point out the difference between his own view of the principles of human action and the sceptical association-of-ideas approach, in his reflections under the heading “Hope, Fear” dated 22 Dec 1736 — i.e. after his return from London — it is possible to see how these views may appear to converge.

Reid did not agree with his London correspondent that a single originating passion — the love of sensible pleasure — gives rise by the association of ideas to all of the other passions. In this view, one might reflect, every emotion would be a species of either attraction or aversion, and human action would be motivated on the pleasure–pain principle. Reid did allow, however, that an imaginative association of ideas can figure in our deliberation, colouring our judgements as, for example, along the axis of hope and fear:

Distant Objects may be made to affect our Hope and fear as much or almost as much as those that are near by Consideration & Reflection. This Constitution a Great Relief to the Weakness of our Natures which make us apt to be most moved by what we feel most for the present.

Although it might strike one that hope and fear — “Sensations excited by the belief or expectation of Some future Event Good or Bad” — stand in analogous relation to pleasure and pain, Reid’s formulation is saved from the binary reductivism of his correspondent by a number of considerations. First, if hope and fear are not derived from some other, originating, passion, neither do they seem to be by Reid’s lights the *only* primary passions. (Others, as I will show, are grief and anger.) Moreover, they are mediated, as Reid suggests in this passage, by an act of reflection. Reid’s point is that our raw instincts are tempered by reason and experience. They form under the *governance* of reason part of the apparatus of judgement. Hope and fear constitute “[acts] of Judgment founded upon the apparent Proba[bi]lity whether the Event be Good, Evil, or Indifferent.” While hope and fear are “more apt to be excited by Events that are near than Events that are at a great Distance,” distant events may at times concern us more than present circumstances. It may, in other words, be quite possible for us to uncloud our judgement by means of a calm consideration of the future and sober reflection on experience. In this way the road to virtue may be more effectively pointed out and more safely travelled, for hope and fear are “great [spurs] to the persuit of Good & the avoiding of evil.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the

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<sup>16</sup>MS. 7/V/6, fo. 1r–v.



passions of hope and fear are instrumental to right action, but only when their proper objects have been identified by reason. It is their susceptibility to “consideration and reflection” that, perhaps paradoxically, allows the passions to “relieve” us, that is, to ease the burden of our brutish nature and make liberty — and, by extension, politics — possible. The appeal to belief and probability which Reid makes here in response to the sceptical view of the passions prefigures his reading of Butler, as I will show in the next chapter.

Reid’s reliance upon a mediating reasonableness that acts upon the passions is, however, not unproblematic in view of the commandeering of reason at a parallel point in the sceptics’s argument, and on this point Reid might be said to be in danger of giving up some ground. In the sceptical formulation, reason might be viewed as a scout and spy, to use a Hobbesian phrase, of the passions. Reid would not take up the task of pointing out what he believed to be the proper, i.e. unsceptical, framework of the passions (that is, reason or common sense) until his teaching years. But even then, as I shall demonstrate in due course, he made what could hardly be described as insignificant concessions to the sceptics.

In a lecture note probably dating from the Aberdeen period, Reid wrote: “in many Cases where the cool [i.e. rational] Consideration of Interest or Duty might fail to raise the Passions of Desire Hope or Fear may answer the End. The Passions therefore are of great Use to give force to th(o)se principles of Action which of themselves would act coolly”<sup>17</sup> As Reid would make clear in his Glasgow lectures on politics some thirty years later, this is of great importance to the statesman or legislator in that political judgement operates on the basis of such probabilities as constitute the groundwork of the passions. A prudent statesman may encourage or restrain the hopes and fears of the citizenry in order to promote virtue. A wise legislator may also avail himself of another pair of passions, namely grief and joy. “Grief [is] one of the best Medicines of the Mind (and) brings us into a state of Sober thinking & recollection”.<sup>18</sup>

Reid drew this connection between the passions and politics in an explicitly political context in the *Active Powers* where he remarked in republican fashion that “The art of government is the medicine of the mind, and the most useful part of it is that which prevents crimes and bad habits, and trains men to virtue and good habits by

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<sup>17</sup>MS. 7/V/23, p. [6].

<sup>18</sup>MS. 7/V/6, fo. 1v.

proper education and discipline.”<sup>19</sup> The manipulation of the passions for political purposes is of course a familiar recourse of the sceptic as well; here again may be observed in broad outline the sceptical framework within which Reid would have to operate as he tried to lay the foundations for a science of politics consistent with a philosophy of common sense.

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<sup>19</sup>*Works*, p. 578a.

### Chapter 3

#### Pondering Probability: Butler versus Hume

On 12 May 1737, soon after his return from England, Reid was ordained and presented to the living of the nearby parish of New Machar by King's College, Aberdeen, in whose gift it then was. He would retain this position for fifteen years. Reid's settlement was opposed at first because of the parishioners' distaste for the rule of patronage and their outright hostility towards Reid's predecessor, who had been imposed upon the congregation by a so-called riding committee appointed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. But the parishioners eventually rallied round Reid, owing, it seems, both to "the active spirit of his humanity" and to the "good offices among the sick and necessitous" of his wife, Elizabeth, whom he married on 12 August 1740. "We fought against Dr Reid when he came," remarked some old members of the congregation, "and would have fought for him when he went away."<sup>1</sup>

Reid apparently continued to serve his parishioners long after he stopped being their pastor. He is reputed to have bestowed, out of his own pocket, a pension on one man who had been a member of the kirk session when Reid was a minister but who had fallen on hard times in old age. "The pride of science had not from the mind of this great man eradicated the amiable sympathies of humanity," wrote the anonymous author of an article on Reid in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "nor had his philosophic fame made him overlook the unassuming duties of the Christian pastor."<sup>2</sup>

Be that as it may, by Reid's own account he failed to set such a shining example for much of the time he served New Machar. Whether he was overly harsh in his self-criticisms in the confession he committed to paper on 30 March 1746, when his wife was seriously ill, it may now be impossible to judge:

I have been too negligent of my pastoral duty and my private devotions, too much given to the pleasures and satisfactions of this world, and too little influenced by the promises and the hope of a future state. I have employed my studies, reading, and conversation rather to please myself than to edify myself and others. I have sinned

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<sup>1</sup> Stewart, "Account," in *Works*, p. 5a–b.

<sup>2</sup> 3rd ed., Supplement, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1801), p. 398.



greatly in neglecting many opportunities of making private applications to my flock and family in the affairs of their souls, and in using too slight preparation for my public exercises. I have thrown away too much of my time in sloth and sleep, and have not done so much for the relief of the poor and destitute as I might have done.<sup>3</sup>

On the character of Reid's sermons there is also little evidence, as, unfortunately, none of them <sup>has</sup> survived. If Ramsay of Ochertyre is to be believed, Reid's "style of preaching was far from being popular or alluring, being clear, plain, mathematical reasoning, little indebted to voice or action."<sup>4</sup> Slightly more relaxed was Reid's practice, common at that time, of borrowing the sermons of others. According to tradition, Reid preached in addition to his own compositions (the number of which was, so Dugald Stewart tells us, "not inconsiderable") the sermons of Samuel Clarke, John Tillotson and John Evans.<sup>5</sup>

It seems reasonable to suppose that Reid's own compositions partook of the Moderate style. The clerics from whom he drew additional sermons ran the gamut of Latitudinarian opinion, ranging from the rationalist views of Archbishop Tillotson to those of the Dissenter, Evans, with the reconciling voice of Clarke's rational Christianity to harmonize them.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Gerard, who often preached for Reid at New Machar, was a Robertson Moderate, a party affiliation typical of northern ministers of the day.<sup>7</sup>

Tillotson was a supreme rationalist who swore he would trust the dictates of his own reason even against the authority of organized science and who discarded spiritual dogma in favour of the evidence of his senses. Evans, for his part, boasted the superior certainty of Christianity. "When we have made our estimate in worldly matters," he wrote,

a thousand unforeseen accidents may baffle all our hopes, and spoil the best concerted undertakings. Every design for time is subject to such disappointments; and yet men consider and reckon upon

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Campbell Fraser, *Thomas Reid*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>*Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1888), p. 472.

<sup>5</sup>Stewart, "Account," in *Works*, p. 5b; Campbell Fraser, *Thomas Reid*, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>See Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789* (n.p.: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962), p. 158; Ernest Campbell Mossner, *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup>See G.D. Henderson, "A Member of the Wise Club," *Aberdeen University Review*, vol. 24, no. 70 (Nov 1936), p. 6; Ramsay of Ochertyre, quoted in P.B. Wood, "Thomas Reid," p. 5.

probabilities. But in Christianity we have surer measures to proceed by.<sup>8</sup>

Clarke took a slightly more philosophical path between Tillotson and Evans. He was consumed by the question of the liberty of human actions and concluded that

The True liberty of a Rational and Moral Agent, consists in his being able to follow right Reason only, without Hindrance or Restraint. It consists in a clear unbiassed Judgment, and in a Power of acting conformably thereunto. Man therefore is then Free, when his Reason is not awed by base Fears, nor bribed by foolish and fantastick Hopes; when it is not tumultuously hurried away by Lusts and Passions, nor cheated and deluded by false Appearances of present Good; but considers impartially, and judges wisely, and acts effectually and with Resolution.

According to Clarke, right reason is the only “natural and proper Motive” to action, although the will is often propelled by lesser motives. Clarke drew an analogy between the government of the natural world and that of the moral world, discerning in these different realms the same “close and regular ... Connexion” whereby “whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap”. As we saw earlier, this was the analogy that Turnbull drew in his *Principles*. Whatever else he may have been doing at this point, Reid was clearly following in Turnbull’s footsteps. Clarke maintained that the certainty of the relationship between moral causes and effects “is the Reason and End of all Laws; the Maintenance and Support of all Government, the Foundation and Ground-work of all Religion”. Clarke also argued “the reasonableness of judging concerning mens Hearts from their Actions” and characterized “men’s final State of Happiness or Misery ... [as] the proper and correspondent Effect of their present Actions.”<sup>9</sup> Reid evidently carried this with him into the classroom at Glasgow, for on 10 October 1764, in his inaugural lecture, he admonished his students,

from a deep conviction of the importance of [their] present behaviour to [their] future happiness, from a conviction that as [they] now sow [they] shall afterwards reap, ... [to] shake off sloth and indolence, and apply [them] selves with vigour to the work which [God’s] providence calls [them] to be employed in.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Sermons upon Various Subjects, Preach’d to Young People* (London, 1725), p. 56.

<sup>9</sup>*The Sermons of Samuel Clarke*, 5th ed., vol. 1 (London, 1742), p. 219; vol. 2 (London, 1742), pp. 25–27.

<sup>10</sup>MS. 4/11/9, fo. 1r.

The emphasis on free will implicit in Reid's use of Clarke, detracting as it would have done from the awesome God and double decrees contained in the strict Calvinist doctrine of predestination, assured Reid a place among those Moderates who taught a nonnecessitarian Calvinism, or, in Paul Wood's phrase, "a polite brand of Arminianism."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Clarke's insistence on the essential knowability of the human heart (or at least of the human character) by deeds, which was probably appropriated by Reid at this time (he certainly adhered to it a short while later, as his writings, both published and unpublished, abundantly show), was certainly at odds with that Calvinist-derived scepticism with regard to the heart that is to be found in Hutcheson and others.

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In 1726 the Anglican divine Joseph Butler published his *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*. While there is no evidence that Reid read Butler's *Fifteen Sermons* in this period, his pupil, Dugald Stewart, reported that

the short *Dissertation on Virtue* which Butler has annexed to that work, together with the *Discourses on Human Nature* published in his volume of *Sermons*, he used always to recommend as the most satisfactory account that has yet appeared of the fundamental principles of Morals.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, as the *Fifteen Sermons* provide some of the discursive background for the sceptical questions which Butler addressed in his *Analogy of Religion* (1736), a book Reid is known to have read at this time, it is justifiable to consider the *Sermons* here.

With his publication of the *Fifteen Sermons* Butler entered the debate about the passions lately reopened by Bernard Mandeville, a Dutch physician who had settled in London, in the first edition of his *Fable of the Bees* (1714). The Presbyterian minister Francis Hutcheson carried on the controversy with Mandeville in the pages of the *London Journal*, where he provided, under the pseudonym Philanthropos, a "Specimen" of his imminent *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). Another work, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. With Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, would appear in 1728.

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<sup>11</sup>"Thomas Reid," p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>"Account," p. 32b.

Neither Mandeville nor Hutcheson nor Butler regarded the passions as inherently bad. All three philosophers agreed that the passions direct us in the choice of ends and motivate us to achieve them.<sup>13</sup> As Mandeville put it,

Man never exerts himself but when he is rous'd by his Desires: While they lie dormant, and there is nothing to raise them, his Excellence and Abilities will be for ever undiscover'd, and the lumpish Machine, without the Influence of his Passions, may be justly compar'd to a huge Wind-mill without a breath of Air.<sup>14</sup>

Further, all believed that reason was not good in itself so much as *instrumental*, i.e. concerned with pointing out the means to realize those goals determined by the passions. Accordingly, none of them ~~were~~<sup>was</sup> rationalists in the spirit of Clarke, who regarded passional motivation as slavish and its rational counterpart as free. Butler had clearly made an important concession to the sceptics.

Where these modern precursors of Hume in the study of man and of the passions differed from one another was in their characterizations of fallen mankind. Mandeville, following in the Augustinian tradition as expressed in orthodox Calvinism, viewed human beings as essentially depraved, whereas Hutcheson and Butler, proceeding on more hopeful premisses, regarded mankind as eminently improvable. The moral sceptic, Mandeville, accordingly emphasized "self-liking" as mankind's primary motivation, and focussed on the prudent manipulation of this passion by self-serving legislators whose aim was to gratify individual selfishness and produce social benefits without having to rely on the practice of virtue (which is at any rate unattainable by most people). Here, the emphasis was on an effortless, mechanistic, institutionalized solution. By contrast, Hutcheson and Butler, each with his own set of specific emphases, stressed the importance of benevolence as an actuating passion and concentrated on the naturalness of society and on the encouragement of virtuous conduct.

Despite their disagreements on the subject of the passions, Mandeville, Hutcheson and Butler were united in their largely empirical approach to morals, in which "the content of morality, and ... the explanation of moral obligation" were to be found in the study of human nature rather than in eternal reason or in the will of a superior.<sup>15</sup> I take Butler's description as representative. His method began

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<sup>13</sup>See Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, pp. 67, 77–78, 98.

<sup>14</sup>Ed. F.B. Kaye, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 184.

<sup>15</sup>Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, pp. 66, 91; see also pp. 59, 67, 73–74, 76–78, 81, 93–94, 97–99, 105.

from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature.<sup>16</sup>

This was the method that Hume approved; it was also the one that Reid had been trained up to.

Reid was obviously much impressed by Butler's *Analogy*: he made extensive reading notes on it in November 1738 and would add comments to these when he was preparing his lectures for print forty-two years later, in 1781. One might wonder if it was in response to Reid's endorsement of the work that two Glasgow publishers, Foulis and Urie, brought out editions of the *Analogy* in 1764, the year Reid took up the chair of moral philosophy at Glasgow College. In view of Reid's training and what is known of his subsequent opinions, Butler's work was undoubtedly important to Reid for a number of reasons.

First, it confirmed the natural theology teaching he had learned from Turnbull, according to which the regularities observed in the moral and material worlds when studied scientifically are taken to reveal God's providence. Butler began polemically:

Let us then instead of forming Imaginary Models of a World and Schemes of Governing it, turn our thoughts to what we experience to be the Conduct of Nature with respect to intelligent Creatures which may be resolved into General Laws or Rules of Argumentation in the same way as many of the Laws of Nature respecting inanimate Nature may be collected from Experiments.

It is clear from the context that Butler was formulating a direct reply not only to the fatalists (Leibniz in particular, whose opinions Reid had considered in the 1736 Philosophical Club and whose views he would try to refute on at least four occasions in the course of his teaching career) but also to the rationalists, whose methodology, as I observed above, Butler took exception to in the Preface to the *Fifteen Sermons*. Butler then made an observation which Reid paraphrases thus: "Necessity does not exclude Deliberation Choice Preference and acting from certain Principles and to certain Ends for these things we are conscious of in our Selves." This was followed a few pages later by another which, again, I cite in Reid's version: "We find in our

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<sup>16</sup>Preface to *Fifteen Sermons*, in *The Analogy of Religion*, ed. Joseph Angus (London: The Religious Tract Society, [1855], p. 339.



selves a Will and are Conscious of a Character.”<sup>17</sup> (The theologico-political implications of this view are clear: the legislator and the politician, like the preacher or the man of common sense, suppose that an appeal to moral character will be more effective than the pull of natural desire in most men in most situations. Their assumption in this regard is, moreover, a matter of probability, a subject I will consider shortly.) These were opinions that Reid himself had advanced in the Philosophical Club: Butler’s matter-of-fact approach thus confirmed his suspicions concerning the irreconcilability of determinism with the facts of human nature. Moreover, for Butler and Reid the fact that some of the actions that according to these lights are in our power give us pleasure and others cause us pain and that we have been forewarned of this by revelation shows that we are under God’s government.

Having answered the fatalists up to this point, Butler sought next

to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and [to] argue from such facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that part of the Divine government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it; and from what is present, to collect what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.

From this analogy, based in observation, Butler apparently felt entitled to confirm those doctrines which he never doubted, i.e.

that mankind is appointed to live in a future state; that there every one shall be rewarded or punished; rewarded or punished respectively for all that behaviour here, which we comprehend under the words, virtuous or vicious, morally good or evil: that our present life is a probation, a state of trial, and of discipline, for that future one; notwithstanding the objections, which men may fancy they have, from notions of necessity, against there being any such moral plan as this at all.

Implied in the notion of a probationary state is of course a view of moral accountability and improbability consistent with Reid’s non-necessitarian Calvinism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>AUL MS. 3061/10, fo. 3v; pp. [11]–12; cf. *Analogy*, pp. 115, 120.

<sup>18</sup>Introduction to *Analogy*, pp. 8, 11–12; cf. p. 239 (“Temptations render our state a more improving state of discipline, than it would be otherwise: as they give occasion for a more attentive exercise of the virtuous principle which confirms and strengthens it more than an easier or less attentive exercise of it could”); see also pp. 41, 57 (“mankind find themselves placed by [God] in such circumstances, as that they are unavoidably accountable for their behaviour”).



The *Analogy* was no doubt also important to Reid for another reason, for in it Butler maintained that (and here I quote from Reid's abstract) "Probability is the very Guide of Life."<sup>19</sup> Butler's point was that in everyday life we constantly reason from analogy in our observations of physical occurrences and human conduct. We come to believe that such and such an event will take place in certain circumstances because we have seen like occurrences in similar circumstances in the past. Our *observation* that this kind of reasoning holds true in a series of similar cases leads us to conclude that there is a regularity in the material and moral world.<sup>20</sup> When we consider things beyond our immediate observation (e.g. a future state) we find ourselves believing in a like regularity in these things, by analogy with the way in which we form opinions or judgements about things fully within our view. It was of course this kind of reasoning that Hume would subject to Pyrrhonian scrutiny, thereby wreaking havoc on any unselfconscious understanding of belief.

Butler regarded it as beyond the scope of his book

to inquire further into the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability; or whence it proceeds that likeness should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the errors to which reasoning from analogy is liable.<sup>21</sup>

Reid had of course appealed to belief and probability in his own contribution to the debate on the passions, as I showed in the last chapter. Butler must have confirmed Reid's estimation of the usefulness of probable reasoning in those <sup>e</sup>septical times. When Hume's *Treatise* appeared in the following year, Reid must therefore have been unsettled by Hume's attack on belief and probability. This is a subject which I shall explore in detail later in this chapter, and in Part 2. Reid must have appreciated the applicability of Butler's account of probable reasoning to politics in 1738 given what we know of his training under Turnbull. But Reid did not commit to paper his debt to Butler on this point until he reviewed the *Analogy* in 1781. I shall examine Reid's remarks from 1781 when I come to analyze the Glasgow period.

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<sup>19</sup>AUL MS. 3061/10, fo. 3r; cf. Introduction to *Analogy*, p. 5

<sup>20</sup>See *Analogy*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>21</sup>P. 6; see also pp. 3–5.

The archival record of the next decade of Reid's intellectual activity is unfortunately very sparse. There do survive, however, a few drafts and one fair copy<sup>22</sup> of Reid's "Essay on Quantity," his only publication of the entire Aberdeen period, which was read before the Royal Society of London on 3 November 1748 and appeared in their *Philosophical Transactions* for that year.<sup>23</sup> The "Essay" is important for two reasons. First, it shows that Reid entered the lists as he meant to carry on, i.e. as a critical thinker. Secondly, it shows that however interested Reid might have been to consider the latest reply to the sceptics on the subject of the passions, i.e. Hutcheson's *Inquiry*,<sup>24</sup> he was unwilling to construct a fiction of mathematical (i.e. demonstrative) certainty where none existed, ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> possible, or ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> necessary. This required a reassertion of the legitimacy of probable reasoning.

Judging by handwriting and paper size, the earliest of the three surviving drafts of the "Essay" appears to date from the 1730s, probably before 1738.<sup>25</sup> This version, entitled "Concerning the Object of Mathematicks," contains a Butlerian passage. Butler had in the *Analogy* distinguished between probable and demonstrative evidence such that while demonstrative reasoning did not, unlike probable reasoning, admit of degree, probable reasoning could in some instances yield a certainty equal to that of demonstrative reasoning.<sup>26</sup>

There are several things capable of More or less & yet not capable of being measured by number. Tastes Smells, heat cold beauty pleasure pain all the affections and Appetites of the Mind, Probability, Wisdom folly &c &c Altho attempts have been made to apply mathematical reasoning to some of these Subjects and the Merit of Actions has been Measured by Simple & compound ratios Yet I do not think that ever any real knowledge can be struct out this way. It may perhaps if discreetly used be a help to discourse on these Subjects by pleasing the Imagination and illustrating what is already known. As we use Metaphors & Similes taken from Sensible things to illustrate what is moral or Spiritual but I do not think it can serve any other.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>AUL MS. 3061/7.

<sup>23</sup>Vol. 45.

<sup>24</sup>So the subtitle of the second draft (MS. 5/1/22) states.

<sup>25</sup>See Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>See p. 3. In the event Hutcheson expunged the offending mathematical argument from the 4th ed. of 1738, before Reid published his "Essay."

<sup>27</sup>MS. 5/1/20, fo. 1r-v.

In the third and last of the extant drafts, Reid replaced the last sentence in the above quotation with the following, which is preserved (with the exception of one word) in the published version:

But Till our affections and appetites be themselves reduced to Quantity and exact Measures of their Various degrees assigned, In vain do we essay to measure Virtue and Merit by them. This is onely to ring changes upon words, and to make a shew of Mathematical Reasoning without advancing one step in real Knowledge.<sup>28</sup>

Reid probably put the finishing touches on this draft not long before he presented it to the Royal Society. The passages cited here show that Reid did not see mathematical reasoning, with all of the certainty that it claims, as offering a respectable solution to the problems in the theory of the passions which had been raised by the sceptics. The distinction Reid made in the "Essay" between mathematical and probable reasoning was one that he would return to, with ever-increasing attention, first in his King's College lectures on logic, then in his Glasgow College lectures on politics, and again in the *Intellectual Powers*. Thus it appears to be Butler who sustained Reid in his later encounters with, and responses to, moral scepticism, which became particularly urgent indeed when Reid came to study Hume.

3.

Within a year of Reid's enthusiastic reading of Butler, David Hume published Books 1 and 2 (on the understanding and on the passions, respectively) of his *Treatise of Human Nature*. Book 3, on morals, appeared in 1740.<sup>29</sup> The evidence shows that Reid must have read Hume at least before 1743,<sup>30</sup> probably in 1739–1740,<sup>31</sup> and

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<sup>28</sup>MS. 2/1/1, fo. 3v.

<sup>29</sup>It is interesting that Hume credited Butler with helping to put the science of man on an experimental footing (see Introduction to *Treatise*, pp. 16–17; cf. *An Abstract of ... A Treatise of Human Nature*, in *Treatise*, p. 646). The *Abstract*, which has been attributed to Hume, was first published anonymously in London in 1740 (see P.H. Niddich, Textual Notes to *Treatise*, p. 667).

<sup>30</sup>See *Works*, p. 283a: "I once believed the doctrine of ideas so firmly as to embrace the whole of Berkeley's system in consequence of it; till, finding other consequences to follow from it, which gave me more uneasiness than the want of a material world, it came into my mind, more than forty years ago, to put the question, What evidence have I for this doctrine, that all the objects of my knowledge are ideas in my own mind?"; and also R to Dr James Gregory, 7 Apr 1783, in *Works*, p. 62a, where some indication is given of when the portion of the *Intellectual Powers* in which this statement occurs was compiled/composed.

<sup>31</sup>See Dedication to *Inquiry*, in *Works*, p. [95]a: "I never thought of calling in question the principles commonly received with regard to the human understanding, until the *Treatise of Human Nature* was published in the year 1739."

thereby faced the greatest intellectual challenge of his career, one that would call forth a response from him on all fronts, pneumatological, logical, ethical and political.

In view of the enormous impact of Hume's philosophy on Reid, it might be instructive to review the latter's usage of "ideas" in the few years prior to the appearance of the *Treatise*, for Hume's redefinition of this concept would, as I shall demonstrate, cause Reid to rethink the whole of moral philosophy. I turn to Reid's reflections on his experience in the 1736 Philosophical Club:

I find particularly that discoursing for some time on a Subject or on different Subjects with Men of parts, debating points freely, especially if at the Same time I am in Good health & good humor & have a brisk Circulation in my Blood, does very much quicken My Intellectual powers, and Stirrs my Ideas So that they rise more easily in my Mind for some time after. [At such times,] Ideas & words croud upon our minds and push themselves into our view, [whereas] at other times we must pump and Squeeze & beat our brains and can hardly find anything after all.<sup>32</sup>

Their biographical interest aside, these observations might strike one, in the knowledge of what was soon to come, by virtue of their freedom from any Humean anxiety surrounding the concept of Ideas. Reid's unfettered and indeed highly metaphorical expression in this passage marks one of the last occasions when he could take for granted the commonality of certain epistemological concepts within philosophical discourse, and when his own choice of words was not constrained by the existence of a field of Humean signifiers. Against this Humean language Reid would have to shore up and contain his own, common-sense intentions, and try to reclaim some discursive territory.

To stay with the pre-Humean period of Reid's thought for a moment, when Reid spoke of "ideas" he was referring to "non-representational mental objects actively created by the mind." Sensations, on the other hand, were "images of objects passively received by the mind".<sup>33</sup> Evidence for this may be found in the Lockean bias of Reid's abstract of and commentary on Peter Browne's *Procedure, Extent and Limits of the Human Understanding*.<sup>34</sup> Written as they were on the eve of the publication of the first two volumes of Hume's *Treatise*, these reading notes indicate

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<sup>32</sup>MS. 6/I/17, fos 4r, 2v.

<sup>33</sup>Wood, "Thomas Reid and the Scottish Enlightenment," p. 5.

<sup>34</sup>AUL MS. 3061/10, fo. 2r-v.

that even before Hume's book appeared Reid had become somewhat uncomfortable with the Berkelian language of ideas, but had not anticipated the logical conclusion to which it would be driven by Hume. Reid's notes emphasize that the mind is active as well as acted upon, and that its activity is in many ways its defining characteristic. Reid's prepossession in this regard would cause him to doubt Hume's view, which was in some measure inconsistent with the notion of an active mind.

The central premiss of Hume's *Treatise* is the Pyrrhonian view that (to borrow Reid's later formula) nothing exists but that which is, quite literally, in the mind of the perceiver; that is, impressions, and the ideas which derive from those impressions, of things the existence of which in the external world we cannot be sure of. Unfortunately, nothing like a full set of reading notes relating to the *Treatise* in which one might have expected Reid to gloss Hume's theory, is now extant among Reid's papers in Aberdeen. What *has* survived is a paper in Reid's handwriting dated 22 October 1748 concerning the nature of the self, and this relates unmistakably to Hume's doctrine of impressions and ideas.

In the *Treatise* Hume had argued that the self is not some entity that we perceive, and since we can have impressions only of things which we actually perceive, we can have neither impressions nor ideas of the self. For Hume, the self is merely a sequence of perceptions, connected together (in Reid's phrase) by "the associating qualities of ideas",<sup>35</sup> and is emphatically not a thing that perceives or, still less perceives *itself*, or in whom the various perceptions that pass through the mind are unified in an interpretative, and a self-interpretative, whole.

Reid rejected this line of reasoning. Just as he had done some years before in connection with the concepts of liberty and power, he began by confirming the first "constitutions" or cognitive structures of which we are all conscious (which Hume rejected as being mere fictions), to which all thoughts and perceptions immediately refer and on which all cogitation ultimately depends. Reid wrote:

Among the various objects of thought & Reflexion there is none that is more familiar or seems at first view to be better understood by us than Self. ... I seem to have no idea of it and yet am under an invincible Necessity of believing there is some such thing. It seems

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. *Treatise*, pp. 207 ("what we call a mind, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, tho' falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity"), 252 ("mankind ... are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement"), 265 ("that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person.")



one of the most natural & original principles that we continue the same individual unchanged in all the vicissitudes and varieties of thought and perception.

That constitution which underpins even “Self-consciousness”, i.e. our common sense, and which was neither an impression nor an idea, was henceforth to become the touchstone of Reid’s epistemology, and his bulwark against Humean scepticism, whether epistemological, moral or political, as I will demonstrate in due course.<sup>36</sup>

Later in the Aberdeen period, after Hume had published his *Treatise*, Reid would try to restore the common meanings of the words “ideas” and “impressions”, claiming that Hume had given new meanings to old words and thereby undermined ordinary language, which in its uncorrupted state provides an insight into the structure of the mind and is therefore the clearest philosophical language we can hope for. Even so, in the Glasgow period Reid ~~felt~~<sup>thought</sup> it necessary to replace the word “ideas” with “notions” while revising certain of his lecture notes (including one on politics), no doubt in order to escape the Humean connotation.

Moreover, Reid would in the course of his teaching career perceive (a little unfairly, it must be said) certain moral and political consequences as proceeding from Hume’s epistemological scepticism, as he understood this in his manuscript on the self. This scepticism, as he rightly believed, followed from the inexorable logic of Hume’s theory of ideas. Its consequences — though denied by Hume himself — were evident to Reid at least by 1762, although he had established the line of argument that would allow him to make these additional criticisms as early as 1759.<sup>37</sup> The crux of the matter might be described in the following manner. If mankind is nothing but mind and mind a mere mass of perceptions, what then constitutes “a reality”, and how do we perceive such realities? Hume’s answer involved the judgement which distinguishes real ideas, whose impressions strike us more forcefully, from “mere fictions”, or “offspring of the imagination”, which do not make such a strong impression on us. This judgement enables us powerfully to “paint the universe in [our] imagination”. The ideas we thus form are distinct, therefore, from “the loose reveries of a castle-builder.”<sup>38</sup> Reid was unhappy with Hume’s characterization of judgement (although he may have understood Hume imperfectly on this point) and with his definition of ideas. He made the following lament in Oration 4:

<sup>36</sup>MS. 6/1/18, pp. 1–2.

<sup>37</sup>See *Philosophical Orations*, pp. 960–961.

<sup>38</sup>*Treatise*, pp. 97, 108; cf. pp. 85–86; 116; 117, n. 1; 122; 123; 135; 219.



If [judgement] is only involved in [examining the agreement or disagreement of ideas], woe is me, since neither my soul is an idea nor my friends, associates, parents, kinfolk nor my fatherland are ideas, nor are the world and the Founder and most wise Ruler of the world ideas. About these objects, their existence, attributes, relationships, there will be no judgment, nothing will be established, nothing discovered, not even probability!<sup>39</sup>

In the *Inquiry* (1764) Reid would emphasize that our belief “that thought [supposes] a thinker, ... love a lover, and treason a traitor” is founded on “judgments of nature — judgments not got by comparing ideas, and perceiving agreements and disagreements, but immediately inspired by our constitution.”<sup>40</sup> While there is no evidence that these objections had occurred to Reid in 1748, it is clear that by this time he had already begun to question the assumptions of Hume’s philosophy from which flowed (or so he feared) the more remote effects to which he would object.

On the other hand it could not have escaped Reid’s notice that the whole force of Hume’s sceptical reasoning in the *Treatise* was directed against those very probabilities (e.g. the existence of God, his government of the world, the immortality of the human soul, man as a progressive being capable of improving himself) which Reid had taken as read in Butler’s *Analogy*. Butler had been quick to justify our reliance in everyday conduct on probability (of whatever grade), observing “that the slightest possible presumption ... often repeated, will amount even to moral certainty.”<sup>41</sup> Hume, by contrast, was anxious to break the force of such ill-founded opinions. Building on his Pyrrhonian assumptions about the weakness of reason and the senses, he attempted to show that all so-called knowledge (whether in natural or moral philosophy) is nothing more than opinion or probability, that the result of examining even the highest probability tends to “reduce the mind to a total uncertainty” and that such a state of uncertainty, far from sustaining our opinions about heaven and earth, actually “[subverts] all belief and opinion”, because conviction is impossible where no one “opinion [is] ... more probable or likely than another.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, pp. 984–985. In the early 1780s, Reid would take up this theme again: if “[w]hat [we] call a father, a brother, or a friend, is only a parcel of ideas in [our minds]”, he reasoned, these people, being only bundles of impressions, cannot possibly stand “in the relation of father, brother, friend, or fellow-citizen” to us, and, consequently, the very basis of morals, and in particular of jurisprudence, would be at an end (*Works*, p. 285a).

<sup>40</sup>*Works*, pp. 109b, 110b.

<sup>41</sup>*The Analogy of Religion*, ed. Joseph Angus (London: The Religious Tract Society, [1855]), p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>*Treatise*, pp. 184, 268–269; cf. p. 183: “[requires] a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence.”

Troubling as Hume's sceptical conclusions must have been to Reid at a time when he wholeheartedly endorsed Butler's teaching, the only extant records of his views on this matter date from the 1760s. In this connection, I refer again to Reid's incredulity at Hume's destruction of probability in the passage from Oration 4 (1762) quoted above. At least by the following year<sup>43</sup> Reid had become aware of the devastating consequences of Hume's assault on probability. "I am persuaded," he wrote:

that absolute scepticism is not more destructive of the faith of a Christian than of the science of a philosopher, and of the prudence of a man of common understanding. I am persuaded, that the unjust live by faith as well as the just; that, if all belief could be laid aside, piety, patriotism, friendship, parental affection, and private virtue, would appear as ridiculous as knight-errantry; and that the pursuits of pleasure, of ambition, and of avarice, must be grounded upon belief, as well as those that are honourable or virtuous.<sup>44</sup>

Evidently, Reid was not much impressed by Hume's last-moment disclaimers in the *Treatise* about how nature intervenes to stop the progress of "total scepticism" by making it difficult for the sceptic to persevere in "any subtile reasoning and reflection" and forcing him to believe in those associations made by more "natural and easy" chains of logic, or by his stated preference, in consequence, for "moderate scepticism". Moreover, Hume's approval of the (uncomprehending though correct) "sentiments of the vulgar" in this regard must have struck Reid as empty rhetoric. He probably took more seriously Hume's open suspicion about "the uncertainty of nature" and its consequences for probable reasoning, a subject which Reid would be forced to address at Glasgow.<sup>45</sup>

While from Reid there is neither contemporary nor subsequent testimony to account for his next intellectual move, i.e. a two-and-a-half page "Abstract of Epictetus [*sic*] Morals" (i.e. the *Enchiridion*) dating from about 1750, it seems reasonable to suppose that he was anxious to stay the erosion of belief that had been set in motion by the publication of Hume's *Treatise*. In seeking the building materials with which to buttress the foundations of opinion so shaken by Humean scepticism, Reid found a ready source in Stoic philosophy, a doctrine not incompatible on a certain level

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<sup>43</sup>9 Nov 1763.

<sup>44</sup>Dedication to *Inquiry*, in *Works*, p. [95]b; cf. *Intellectual Powers*, in *Works*, p. 285b; *Active Powers*, in *Works*, p. 617a.

<sup>45</sup>*Treatise*, pp. 131, 183, 186, 223–224; cf. p. 268.

with the rational Christianity espoused by Turnbull and Blackwell.<sup>46</sup> Reid's approval of the Stoics was not uncharacteristic of his time. Elizabeth Carter, one of Epictetus' eighteenth-century translators, praised the Stoics as having been

of very important Use, in the Heathen World: and [the Stoics] are, on many Accounts, to be considered in a very respectable Light. Their Doctrine of Evidence and fixed Principles, was an excellent Preservative from the Mischiefs, that might have arised from the Scepticism of the Academics and Pyrrhonists, if unopposed: and their zealous Defence of a particular Providence, a valuable Antidote to the atheistical Scheme of Epicurus. To this may be added, that their strict Notions of Virtue in most Points, ... and the Lives of several among them, must contribute a good deal to preserve luxurious States from an absolutely universal Dissoluteness; and the Subjects of arbitrary Government, from a wretched and contemptible Pusillanimity.<sup>47</sup>

If ancient Stoicism had been so effective against ancient Pyrrhonism, why should it not also be an adequate defence against its modern incarnation in David Hume?

Moreover, the central message of Epictetus' *Morals*, i.e. the "[disengagement of our souls] from all those slavish Fears, and confounding Troubles, and other Corruptions of human Nature, which are wont to subdue and tyrannize over them",<sup>48</sup> was in harmony with Reid's emphasis on the habits of self-command that are required in order to make a proper use of liberty in this life, and thereby to assure a place in the next. Epictetus' view that we should concentrate on obtaining or developing only those things that are within the narrow compass of our power because that is all that we are ultimately accountable for, was also consistent with Reid's overarching concern with power and accountability.

If that were not enough, Reid would also have found in Epictetus a satisfying like-mindedness in his appeal to common sense:

As that may be called a common Ear, which distinguishes only Sounds; but that, which distinguishes Notes, an artificial one: so there are some Things, which Men, not totally perverted, discern by their common natural Powers; and such a Disposition is called common Sense.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Reid would spell out his theological objection to Stoic philosophy in Glasgow.

<sup>47</sup>Introduction to *All the Works of Epictetus* (Dublin, 1759), 21–22.

<sup>48</sup>George Stanhope, Introduction to his trans. of *Epictetus His Morals, with Simplicius His Comment*, 5th ed. (London, 1741), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup>Carter, trans., *All the Works of Epictetus* (Dublin, 1759), p. 214; cf. Simplicius' commentary, in Stanhope, trans., pp. 27, 76.

It was at about this time, in 1753,<sup>50</sup> that Reid made in the first of his Philosophical Orations what appears to be his earliest appeal to common sense.<sup>51</sup>

In the event, many of the summaries and paraphrases in Reid's "Abstract" confirm the affinity between his own views and Epictetus' on liberty and power. Take, for example, Reid's summary of Chapters 1–7:

Your Actions Desires & Aversions Your opinions and Aversions are the onely things in your Power. [B]ut your body Estate Reputation preferments & all other things are not in your power. What is not in your power should not be the object of your desire or aversion. Nor ought you to look upon such things as pertaining to you and then No[b]ody will be able to hurt or disappoint you. You shall complain of Nothing nor Accuse anybody.

Several other instances could be cited, but what emerges from a careful examination of the passages Reid selected is his overriding concern with opinion, and this under its moral aspect. Reid seems to have been deeply impressed by Epictetus' assertion that our pain is a thing indifferent in itself, and that the grief we experience in consequence of it is a mere state of mind, i.e. a matter of opinion, which it is in our power to control, and which we are obliged to bring into line with our understanding of the deeper reality that our happiness is not tied to the accidents that befall us. According to Epictetus, letting our opinions float free makes us slaves, whether of our own passions, of things in other people's hands, or of fortune in general. Yet perfect self-mastery consists not so much in the essentially negative act of reining in our opinions but in keeping our concern with reputation in its place. As Reid wrote in his "Abstract": "Be not so much Concerned to be thought wise or virtuous as to be really so".<sup>52</sup>

This recalls Mandeville's judgement against English society on the grounds of its rampant hypocrisy. As John B. Stewart explains, "most Englishmen, [Mandeville] found, wished to enjoy the world and the flesh abundantly, all the while insisting that England was, or rather ought to be, a Christian society. They loved the robust wines of Babylon, but smuggled them home in Jerusalem water jugs."<sup>53</sup> Mandeville's sceptical solution, as I remarked earlier, had not been to further the Christian ideal

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<sup>50</sup>9 Apr.

<sup>51</sup>p. 937.

<sup>52</sup>MS. 3/11/4, fo. 1r; cf. fo. 1v ("Be content to be really what you would be thought. But if you must needs be well thought of deserve your own good opinion & that will be Sufficient.")

<sup>53</sup>*Opinion and Reform*, p. 59.

but to allow the mechanisms of private selfishness to serve the public good, people's souls falling by the wayside as they may. In resurrecting Epictetus, Reid argued in the opposite direction, affirming Christian moral teaching. Rather than the indulgence of hypocrisy, Reid advocated a return to common honesty and the polite virtue of modesty.

The antipolitical implications of Epictetus' disdain for the attractions of reputation and power are clear. Unlike Mandeville, Epictetus doubted that private vices could ever produce wider good. "Never part with your Integrity and Modesty under a pretence of putting yourself in a Capacity of Serving your Friends or your Country. For you will be less capable of Serving them in a publick Station without these than in a private one with them. If therefore you can get Riches power preferment without losing your honesty; Do it, that by these advantages you may serve your friends & Country. But dont part with your own real Good that you may procure to others an imaginary one."

Moreover, the social valorization of property and station, a subject heavily glossed by Grotius and Pufendorf and subsequently stripped down by Hume, received a like treatment. In Reid's summary, we find: "Behave yourself in the Affairs of Life as at an Entertainment[;] dont Snatch at what is sent to another but wait patiently till it comes to your turn to be served; what is given you receive with Modestie & Refuse & Distain Delicacies."<sup>54</sup> Thus Epictetus emphasized the virtue of being satisfied with our lot in life and making the best of our condition even though this may require us to be under-achievers. The natural lawyers, by contrast, focussed on aggrandizement with certain provisos, on the whole tending to elevate rather than dismiss the importance of material advantage. When Hume tried to bring interest and notions of the distribution of property closer together (i.e. excluding the redistributive solutions of Christians and Levellers), he was a long way from the minimalist ethics of Epictetus. In his Glasgow lectures on practical ethics, Reid, for his part, would liken "the goods and Accommodations wherewith the Globe of this Earth is stored by the bounty of heaven" to "an Entertainment provided by the Author of Nature for his Creatures who are the Guests." Far from prescribing a certain abstemiousness as Epictetus had done, Reid felt it safe to "[presume] that it is the Will of the Entertainer that everyone of his Guests should be served according to

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<sup>54</sup>MS. 3/II/4, fo. 1v.





their taste and Choise: But that no one should incommode another.”<sup>55</sup> What Reid would retain from his encounter with Epictetus, however, was an abiding faith in the importance of self-command, that Stoic quality which lay at the heart of that “regard for virtue, [which was for Reid] the highest prerogative of the human species”.<sup>56</sup>

While Epictetus may have yielded a defence against Hume’s attack on belief, he could offer Reid no formulation of how private morality could be preserved in the pursuit of political ambitions. It would appear that Reid continued to search for a viable alternative to Hume among the ruins of Stoic philosophy, or at least in the figure of Socrates, whom Reid, like so many others in the eighteenth century, linked with ancient Stoicism. Reid’s “Abstract of Epictetus Morals” is followed in MS. 3/II/4 by a few notes from Book 1, Chapter 1 of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*. These notes relate to Xenophon’s defence of Socrates’ form of worship and his recommendation of reason as the only true guide except “in things whose event is uncertain” and concerning which “the Oracles” should be consulted. We also find the following note, dated September 1750: “Read Xenophontes Memorabilium Lib 5”. (This work is generally known as the *Oeconomicus*.)<sup>57</sup>

Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, in addition to providing an account of agricultural management, afforded a distinctive view of the political uses of moulding the passions, and shaping opinion, through good husbandry.

First, the effects of moulding the passions. In the *Oeconomicus* Xenophon praised agriculture or the science of husbandry as the means of getting a living most consistent with friendship and national defence. It tends, he argued, to make people “hardy and couragious, and able to defend their Country; because by the Fields lying open and exposed to Invaders they have frequent Skirmishes, and therefore know the better how to fight.”<sup>58</sup> The so-called mechanical or illiberal arts, by contrast, “seem to spoil the body and unnerve the mind.” The proof of this may be seen in the following scenario: if we were to suppose their city attacked, the husbandmen, i.e. “the men who have to do with the land would ... vote for defending it, the craftsmen

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<sup>55</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. [204].

<sup>56</sup>*Works*, p. 478b; cf. p. 619b.

<sup>57</sup>Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* was obviously a favourite with Reid, for he would return to it in the first of his *Philosophical Orations* at King’s College (p. 936), again in his lectures on oeconomical jurisprudence at Glasgow College (MS. 7/VII/19, fo. 1v.) and on at least two other occasions (MS. 2/I/10, fo. 3r; *Works*, p. 561a).

<sup>58</sup>R. Bradley, trans., *The Science of Good Husbandry, or, The Oeconomics of Xenophon* (London, 1727), pp. 38–39.



for not fighting, but sitting still, as they have been brought up to do, aloof from toil and danger.”<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, shaping opinion. According to Xenophon, husbandry also teaches the importance of encouraging people and feeding them with hopes; this “breeds good Men” and engenders in them a “Generosity of Spirit and Good Will towards [their] Friends and Country.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, in Book 5 of the *Memorabilia* Xenophon extolled the virtues of the “scientific leader” who is able to motivate people in such a way that they actually “take pride in obedience”.<sup>61</sup>

Given Reid’s long-standing interest in the passions, and in particular in the tendency of hope to “[exalt] the Spirits” and of fear and despair to “Sink” them and to “[stifle] all good and Generous Principles”,<sup>62</sup> it is not surprising that he should value Xenophon as providing a practical manual on how to raise the appropriate sentiments. Xenophon’s agricultural prescription is consistent with the medicine-of-the-mind motif which had figured in Reid’s intellectual discourse in the 1730s, and it is thence entirely fitting that Reid should express a preference for the rural life in his Glasgow lectures on politics, and bestow high praise on William Ogilvie’s *Essay on the Right of Property in Land* in 1789. Reid apparently took very seriously Xenophon’s claim that husbandry is “the Mother and Nurse of all other Sciences”, including that of government.<sup>63</sup> It would be a fairly easy step for Reid, who was still seeking a decisive alternative to Hume’s political scepticism, from Xenophon’s account of the political uses of moulding the passions and opinions of people through good husbandry to the more straightforwardly political view of the sources of authority in Cicero’s *De Officiis*, as I will show presently.

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<sup>59</sup>*Memorabilia and Oeconomicus*, trans. E.C. Marchant (London: William Heinemann, 1923), p. 409.

<sup>60</sup>Bradley, trans., p. 39.

<sup>61</sup>Marchant, trans., p. 523.

<sup>62</sup>MS. 7/V/6, fo. 1r.

<sup>63</sup>Bradley, trans., p. 35; cf. p. 39.

## PART 2

### REID AS PROFESSOR: THE ABERDEEN YEARS

Until now I have been considering the evidence that has survived of Reid's intellectual career before he began to teach. I have observed the extent to which his interests as a student were quickened by his teachers, Turnbull and Blackwell, and subsequently cultivated in his independent reading during his years as librarian and as minister of the gospel. I have followed him in his repeated attempts to come to terms with the sceptics, first in the debate about free will, then in the controversy over the passions and finally in the Pyrrhonian crisis precipitated by Hume.

I shall now chart the course of Reid's intellectual career as he re-entered the university world, this time as a professor. Here we will observe the ways in which his activities were, henceforth, shaped by the demands of teaching to a curriculum, <sup>for</sup> the design of which he himself was largely responsible ~~for~~. In particular, I will show how the restructuring of priorities required by Reid's change of career caused him to turn his attention to politics and called forth from him, for the first time, a systematic series of reflections on that science. Reid's views were largely unformed on many of the still topical problems he had addressed in the past and he returned to these issues in his new role. It will also become clear that the specific *contexts* in which Reid raised these questions are often just as interesting from the point of view of intellectual history as his actual elaborations on the old themes.

In Part 2 I shall follow the development of Reid's political thought during his tenure at King's College 1751–1764. It were to be wished that a more adequate record survived of Reid's "tête-à-têtes" with his friend Dr Andrew Skene in this period, in which they "[spoke] freely of men and things without reserve and without malignity" and endeavoured thereby "to settle the important affairs of State & Church, Colleges & Corporations".<sup>1</sup> In the event, I must rely on a paper trail that is often poorly signposted and look for stray clues of the agendas in play and Reid's responses to those agendas.

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<sup>1</sup> 14 Nov 1764, 30 Dec 1765, NCL MS. THO 2, fos 1r, 7v respectively.

In Chapter 4 I will examine Reid's "Scheme of a Course of Philosophy" and his incomplete translation of Cicero's *De Officiis*, both of which were prepared at an early stage of his encounter with Humean scepticism. Reid appropriated Hume's language of opinion but, alive to the problems inherent in Hume's account of authority, attempted to underwrite this account with the anti-Pyrrhonian analysis of Cicero. I will also consider Reid's use of Montesquieu in 1751–1752.

In Chapter 5 I will discuss Reid's reading of recent works by Hume and Kames and his response to their necessitarianism. Further, I shall examine Reid's institutionalization of Hume's agenda for the science of man in the reformed curriculum at King's 1753–1754.

In Chapter 6 I will review Reid's methodologically informed response to Hume, and his debts in this regard to Bacon, Cicero and Butler. In this Reid returned to the realm of opinion and put forth an important thesis concerning rationality that would guide all of his subsequent political thought.

## Chapter 4

### Beginning a New Science: Montesquieu

According to tradition, when Reid's kinsman Alexander Rait, the Regent and Professor of Philosophy at King's College, died suddenly on 20 October 1751, Reid was approached to fill the vacancy by his cousin, the professor of medicine John Gregory. Reid was reluctant at first, because, he said, "it was his intention to live retired in the country till he should complete some literary plans which then occupied his thoughts."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Reid's papers yield little evidence of what those plans may have been. In any case, on 22 November Reid formally accepted the post. By the report of Principal John Chalmers, Reid must have soon enjoyed some popularity, for he had no difficulty in attracting students to his class against competition from Gerard at Marischal. As Chalmers wrote to the newly appointed professor of Greek, John Leslie, "I do not believe that Mr Reid will go the length of the Bridge of Dee to look after a Bejan [first-year student] tho' our neighbours [at Marischal] are very alert so that you must eyr [either] bring them with you or want."<sup>2</sup>

Reid launched his teaching career by beginning with Rait's second-year students where the late regent had left off. The arts curriculum then in place would have required him to teach ethics in the 1751–1752 session and natural philosophy in 1752–1753. In the absence of any evidence, direct or otherwise, that he proceeded in any other way, I must assume that he followed this curriculum in his first two years of teaching. This was, moreover, the view of the anonymous author of an article on Reid in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, published not long after Reid's death, who suggested that Reid "must have been qualified, without much previous preparation, to read lectures on Logic, Ontology, Pneumatics, Morals, Politics, Mathematics, and Natural Philosophy ..."<sup>3</sup> There had, in other words, been no change in the order of

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<sup>1</sup>Ramsay of Ochertyre, *Scotland and Scotsmen*, vol. 1, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup>In the same letter, however, the Principal reveals another side of Reid: "Mr Reid sits & bums [hums and haws] at Tonser [the hay-cutting] & studies Musick: I scarce think that he will cut his Hay." Reid and Chalmers had interviewed Leslie before his appointment (C to L, 8 Jul 1755, quoted in J.G. Burnett, "An Aberdeen Professor of the Eighteenth Century," *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 13, no. 49 (Oct 1915), pp. 35, 42; see also C to L, 30 Apr 1754, p. 34). I am indebted to Mrs Dareau of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* for her help in interpreting this passage.

<sup>3</sup>3rd ed., Supplement, vol. 2, p. 398.

instruction from Reid's student days to the time when he himself was called upon to teach the course.

Unfortunately, not one scrap of material in the way of lecture or student notes has survived to underline what Reid actually taught in his first couple of years at King's. Instead, the content of his reflections on ethics, which comprised ontology, pneumatics, morals and politics, must be pieced together from other contemporary material. Of such material, there exists only a four-page manuscript headed "Scheme of a Course of Philosophy", which Reid probably prepared within a few months of his arrival at King's,<sup>4</sup> his philosophical oration of 9 April 1753, and six pages of his own translation of Cicero's *De Officiis*,<sup>5</sup> although undated, appears to date from 1752.

The conclusion that the portion of Reid's 1752 "Scheme" dealing with ethics in the broad sense outlined above relates to what he taught on the subject in his first session, as well as the dating of the Cicero translation, is supported by the evidence of Reid's philosophical oration.<sup>6</sup> According to tradition, in his orations, which he delivered triennially in Latin at graduation ceremonies at King's College from 1753 to 1762, Reid summarized his philosophical position and drew together the elements of his three-year course in a kind of concluding statement, or "public rounding-off of [his] course", as the modern-day editor of Reid's orations, Walter Robson Humphries, put it.<sup>7</sup> It may be recalled that graduation theses such as Turnbull's clearly did embody at least part of the substance of what the regent taught. To them were appended a list of questions for disputation. A vestige of this practice seems to have survived in Reid's orations in so far as he called upon the candidates to "produce some sample of [their] ability in the presence of [the] ... assembly."<sup>8</sup> To judge by the schematic, books-and-authors character of the middle section of the 1753 oration,<sup>9</sup> it may reasonably be supposed that Reid was indeed drawing together the different parts of his course in a concluding statement.

The 1753 oration shows that Reid was familiar with the major works, both ancient and modern, on "life and morals," politics, physics and "the art of presenting an

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<sup>4</sup>MS. 8/V/1.

<sup>5</sup>MS. 2/II/8.

<sup>6</sup>The appearance of Reid's handwriting also supports this dating.

<sup>7</sup>Introduction to *Philosophical Orations*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, p. 944.

<sup>9</sup>Pp. 935-942.



argument.” Reid listed the great names in morals and politics, and accorded to each what he considered to be his rightful place in the development of knowledge. Morals, which Reid deemed to be the “most useful” part of philosophy, inquired into “the causes, origin, and nature of virtue”, and was best exemplified in the Socratic writings of, among others, Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle, as well as in Cicero and Bishop Butler. Politics, the “most noble” part of philosophy, and handled admirably by the leading members of the Socratic school referred to above, found its modern exponents in Machiavelli, Harrington, Hume and, above all, Montesquieu. The treatment of physics, which involved an examination into “the laws and principles of natural phenomena” was woefully inadequate in ancient times, but advances had been made in this part of philosophy in modern times by Bacon and, most notably, Newton. Finally, the growth of logic, cultivated though it was by Aristotle, was stunted until Bacon took it in hand.<sup>10</sup>

I have already considered Reid’s reading of Butler, Xenophon and, to some extent, Hume. The “Scheme” of 1752 shows us that there had been still more of Hume in Reid’s preparation for teaching, to say nothing of Cicero. Montesquieu must also have been an important component of Reid’s intellectual diet at this time, but the evidence for this comes from the 1753 philosophical oration, not the 1752 “Scheme.” Accordingly, I will look first at the “Scheme,” and then consider Reid’s translation of Cicero, returning to Montesquieu immediately after that. It will become clear that as he planned and taught his course, Reid would be forced at every turn to engage the sceptics largely on their own terms.

# 1.

In broad outline, Reid’s “Scheme of a Course of Philosophy” embodied Turnbull’s recommendations for educational reform, but the details are of a decidedly Reidian character. I shall review here the different parts of Reid’s “Scheme” in the order in which they are presented, paying particular attention to the heads relating to pneumatology, ethics and politics.

The course was to begin with “The Elements of Geography so far as they can be delivered in a Historical or Narrative Way Containing”, among other things,

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<sup>10</sup>Pp. 935–939.



A very few of the Most remarkable Things belonging to each Country or City Such as their being the Seat of such an Empire the birth place of Such a Great Man the Scene of Such a Battle or famous for the Invention of Such an Art. Some Character of this kind ought to be annexed to every Remarkable place which helps the memory and at the Same time conveys the knowledge of many of the Most Remarkable facts. Which Stick best in the Memory when annexed to the place that is related to them. The Books must be mentioned that give the best account either of the Ancient or Modern state of these Countrys & Some Idea of the books given & the same is to be understood with respect to all the Other parts of Learning Contained in this Course.

This introductory geography–cum–civil history was to be followed by natural history, including “The History of things Under Ground” and of soils, plants and animals. Natural philosophy, comprising, among other things, mechanics and the “Laws of Motion & Machinery”, hydrostatics, pneumatics, magnetism, electricity and optics, was to be taught next, interspersed with, among other things, “Phonicks & the Philosophical Principles of Musick” and geometry, branches of mathematics, “the Projections of the Sphere & if there is time the Principles of Perspective” and astronomy. This section was to be rounded off with an account “Of the Defects of Natural Knowledge & how far these may be Supplied[.] Of the Method of Pursuing Natural Enquiries by Experiments and Observations Illustrated by several Examples[.] The Danger & Mischief of Hypotheses.”

Reid proposed in the next part of his course to begin his consideration of “The Other Grand Branch of human Knowledge[.] ... the Mind”. The first part of this subject would be comprised of “the History of the Human Mind and its Operations & Powers”. Reid’s list of lecture heads for this section, lean as they necessarily are, are of crucial importance in the glimpse they afford us of his attempt to come to grips with the spectre of scepticism at an early stage of his encounter with Hume. I therefore quote the passage in full:

The Avenues of Sensation. simple Perception Ideas of Sensible Things how distinguished from their Objects[.] Beauty & Harmony[.] Imagination its Laws[.] Memory. Internal feelings first More Simple or primary Pain Pleasure Passions Good & bad Humor. Secondary. Of Approbation and Dislike Volition Principles of Action Instincts Appetites Passions Habits Moral Sense Imitation Sense of Honour Self-love Affections[.] (Stories) Knowledge belief opinion. Avenues of Knowledge Sense Memory Consciousness Secondary perceptions of Beauty Harmony Virtue. Our Knowledge of Causes and Effects and of the Constancy of Nature the Analogy of things of Design & final Causes[.] Language & Criticism[.] The Effects of Different original Characters of Education of Habits. The powers of our bodies Minds fitted to our State the Effect of Body & Mind upon each other[.] Painting Poetry[.] Action and Pronunciation[.] Behaviour[.] Air

Exercise Inebriating and Narcotic things. Physiognomy. Dreams.  
Judicial Astrology Omens. Divination.

From these heads it is entirely possible that Reid had already gone some distance in his criticism of Hume's theory of ideas, for he distinguishes here between ideas and their objects, as Hume did not. It is also possible that Reid constructed his menu in such a way that he would be able to discuss the manner in which the mind had been treated before Hume and after Locke.

Reid had no doubt also grasped the connection between Hume's theory of ideas and his (Hume's) account of opinion and belief, as we anticipated in an earlier chapter. For Hume, opinion could be reduced to impressions and ideas which did not refer to any real object and whose stability was therefore dependent on the constancy and concurrence of people's imaginations. Reid must have considered this to be an unreliable epistemological foundation on which to rest opinion.

Reid seems to have turned to Cicero for a more satisfactory account of opinion. He used Cicero extensively in mapping out the section of his course on ethics and, as I will reveal presently, translated the important opening pages of *De Officiis*. It is surprising that in the "Scheme" Reid made no reference to rational principles of action in relation to the question of opinion — a concept that would figure importantly in his later thought — as the Ciceronian translation could have afforded him the notion of a common rationality as the guarantor of opinion.

But while Reid was apparently still a long way from the stance he would finally take on Hume on this point, other hints — the emphasis on our *knowledge* of causes and effects rather than on our mere opinion of their connectedness and the belief in final causes — in the above outline of pneumatology suggest that Reid was at least working up a reply to Hume on the causality front.

The reference to design in the above passage is strongly reminiscent of Butler and Turnbull, as are the heads in Reid's plan for his lectures on "The Knowledge of God and of his Natural Government", which I now quote in full:

The Laws by which he Governs Inanimate Matter Brutes & Men. Our Capacity of Moral Government. The Indications of our being Under it and of our State here being a State of Discipline & Improvement in order to another

The Natural Immortality of the Soul.

Reid's criticism of Humean scepticism thus was sustained by the rational Christianity he had learned from Turnbull and found confirmation of in Butler.

The last major part of Reid's "Scheme," dealing with "Ethicks & Economicks Politicks",<sup>11</sup> has the character of an elaborate gloss on a few central passages in Books 1–2 of Cicero's *De Officiis*. As I have already hinted, Reid's policy seems to have been: if one cannot stop the penetration of scepticism into morals and politics via opinion, one must at least underwrite it with an epistemology that is a little more sure-footed.

After setting out the parameters of this part of the course, i.e. "Ethicks & Economicks Politicks", Reid proposed to consider "The Grand Instruments of Governm<sup>t</sup>". He begins in the "Scheme" with the assertion that authority is "acquired by the Opinion Of Wisdom of Goodness of Right Courage & Military Skill Eloquence". This is a Xenophontian/Ciceronian formula which Reid would repeat in the *Active Powers* (1788) in a passage that may in fact have been written in the summer of 1786.<sup>12</sup> But while the view that all authority rests on opinion is implicit throughout Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and Cicero's *De Officiis*,<sup>13</sup> Reid's idiom in this passage becomes almost Humean, as I will show presently. In what is apparently a gloss on his remarks on authority Reid considered the Ciceronian theme of "The Prerogatives of human Nature or the Chief Excellencies of one Man above another."<sup>14</sup> Under this heading Reid declared: "Authority ... takes its Rise 1 from Opinion of Merit[.] 2 from opinion of Right. 3 from Opinion of Divine Commission or Authority or of Divine Favour that attends and prospers a Man. Or of Interest & Favour with the Great or Many[.] There is also some degree of Authority that arises from high Birth or beauty."

Hume had of course identified interest as the true source of allegiance to government in Book 3 of the *Treatise*.<sup>15</sup> He also developed his ideas on opinion as the basis of authority in the following essays: "Of the First Principles of Government" (1741) and its reiteration in his "Whether the British Government Inclines More to Absolute Monarchy, or to a Republic" (also 1741), and the frequently cited "Of National

<sup>11</sup>Fos 1r–2r.

<sup>12</sup>See R to Dr James Gregory, [Mar 1786], in *Works*, pp. 67b–68a; cf. R to G, 14 Mar 1784, in *Works*, p. 63a. In the *Active Powers* R characterized opinion as that "[instrument] of government" which is "the sweetest, and most agreeable to the nature of man" (*Works*, p. 577b; cf. p. 554b).

<sup>13</sup>See *On Duties*, pp. 42, 45, 70–71, 76–81, 88–89.

<sup>14</sup>Epictetus had also employed the language of prerogative that featured in this passage (see Stanhope, trans., p. 6; cf. pp. 42, 91 (Simplicius' use of "prerogative")).

<sup>15</sup>See pp. 53ff.

Characters" (1748).<sup>16</sup> Hume spoke in these places of "the opinion of right" and the dependency of courage (and indeed of human affairs generally) on opinion, and also of the "opinion of interest".

It is hard to believe that even with his as yet underdeveloped notion of rational principles Reid would have been pleased to endorse a view that would put political obligation on the shaky foundation of interest calculation, much less before an audience of fourteen-year-olds. Such scepticism was morally and politically very dangerous, with or without the additional Humean assumption that reason is merely the handmaid of the passions and is therefore eminently subject to the free play of the imagination with its "endless mutable fantasies" and liable thence to the intoxications of superstition and enthusiasm.<sup>17</sup> As far as Hume was concerned, experience teaches us to mistrust such flights as politically destabilizing and the potent enemies of interest. For Reid, a fascination with interest was no less troublesome, because it distracted us from a firm attention to our duties. Hume, of course, never denied "that men are often govern'd by their duties, and are deter'd from some actions by the opinion of injustice, and impell'd to others by that of obligation."<sup>18</sup> But once the solvent of scepticism had laid bare the singular principle of interest, or at least opinion of interest, what was to stop narrowly self-interested behaviours from supplanting ordinary duties? Reid apparently found a solution to this problem in Cicero's notion of duty calculation, which I will consider in more detail. (Reid would refine the Ciceronian solution in his notion of "taking upon oneself a character" in Glasgow.)

Interest, or, more properly, our opinion of what constitutes our best interests, could in Reid's view effectively be channelled by instructing people in the duties that pertain to their station in life, thus giving them a stable basis for calculation and deflecting their attention from more individualistic forms of reckoning. Thus, in an obvious paraphrase of Cicero, Reid headed up the next section of the proposed lectures on ethics, economics and politics with "The Scale of Human Life".<sup>19</sup> Reid envisaged a threefold classification of duties on the criteria of how easily they may be attained and the degree of honour that attaches to them as a result. "Some things are attainable by all Men & make up the Duties of Low Life", e.g. "To live virtuously keep a Good

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<sup>16</sup>See David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987; hereinafter *Essays*), pp. 32–36, 51, 212.

<sup>17</sup>Nicholas Phillipson, *Hume* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1989), p. 39; see also *Treatise*, pp. 414–415, 457–458.

<sup>18</sup>*Treatise*, p. 457.

<sup>19</sup>See *On Duties*, p. 62 and also pp. 22–24.



Conscience towards God and Man to provide for ones family by some honest Employment Such as Husbandry Manual Arts Traffick.” This again clearly derives from Book 1 of *De Officiis*.<sup>20</sup> “Those who exercise these Employments honestly & make profit by them are usefull Members of Society”, Reid continued. In another remark very much in a Ciceronian spirit, Reid suggested that “those who Improve them [i.e. husbandry, manual arts, traffic] by new Inventions deserve Honour & Publick Reward.”<sup>21</sup> Pufendorf had also taken this point from Cicero in Book 1, Chapter 8 of his *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*.<sup>22</sup>

Reid then turned from these humble duties to the “professions that belong to Middle life & are more Honourab<sup>le</sup>”, e.g. “Publick Instructors in Religion or in the Liberal Arts Physicians Lawiers Judges”.<sup>23</sup> Finally, Reid moved from the professions of middle life to “Things still of a Higher Degree”, e.g. “the Government of Large bodies of Men by means of Political or Military Skill or Eloquence”. This classical triad of politics, arms and rhetoric was eminently suited to the abilities of that class of men to whom Cicero addressed himself in *De Officiis*.

It was of course by eloquence that “human beings, who had been scattered originally over mountain and forest, were ... snared” and gathered together, as Cicero related in Book 1 of *De Oratore*.<sup>24</sup> This is undoubtedly what Reid had in mind here, and it is a subject to which he would return in his 1766 lectures on eloquence.<sup>25</sup> Here Reid was trespassing (or perhaps poaching) on sceptical territory. In *The Fable of the Bees* Mandeville had argued that eloquence in the debased form of flattery was the “bewitching Engine” by which men were rallied into civil society and the ambitious enabled to “reap the more Benefit from, and govern vast Numbers of them with the greater Ease and Security.”<sup>26</sup> It is unlikely that Reid meant to open such “a vast Inlet

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<sup>20</sup>See pp. 57–59.

<sup>21</sup>See *On Duties*, pp. 66–70.

<sup>22</sup>See ed. James Tully and trans. Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; hereinafter *Duty of Man and Citizen*), p. 64. James Tully has observed other Ciceronian passages in Pufendorf (see Introduction to *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. 27, 30).

<sup>23</sup>These *professions* must, however, be distinguished from what Cicero called “middle *duties*” (emphasis added; *On Duties*, p. 105; cf. p. 5).

<sup>24</sup>Trans. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1942), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup>See MS. 8/1/2, fo. 5r: “Without this Power men could never have associated in Political Society. They never could have had Laws or Government. They must have remained Savages to all Generations.

<sup>26</sup>5th ed., [pt. 1] (London, 1728), pp. 29, 33; cf. pp. 153, 200, 230–231.

to Hypocrisy".<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that he was obliged to draw upon Cicero, among others, in order to combat the scepticism of Hume.

The remainder of Reid's remarks in the final section of his 1752 "Scheme" are devoted to virtue and power and their relationship to each other. Reid's analysis of these topics is characteristically Ciceronian:

The things which ought to be the objects of Ambition which claim Honour & Respect from others and make a Man great & usefull & raise him above the herd of mankind may I think be reduced to these two Classes Power & Virtue. Virtue is the principle of all real Excellence [and] Power its instrument[.] Virtue is the Soul & Spirit[,] & Power the Organ by which Virtue accomplishes its Ends And Purposes[.] Virtue without power would be onely of use to its owner[.] Power without Virtue is equally apt to produce good or Evil. to be dreadfull & detestable or amiable & honourable.

After thus defining power in terms of virtue, Reid proceeded to suggest that:

Power has various principles that deserve to be particularly Enumerated[:] 1 Riches which is in itself among the lowest & most despicable Species of power 2 Authority ... 3 Strength of Body & Hardiness of Constitution [4] Science Memory Judgment Wit. Good Manners if Proportion to the Reality or Importance gives a Man Power [5] Prudence by which I mean the Habit of Judging right of times and opportunities of Men & their principles and Capacities of knowing when to conceal & when to shew ones own Designs the Arts of Popularity of the proper means & Instruments of bring them to Effect. This as a thing very different from mere knowledge [6] Operative Habits and Skill in Arts [7] Many Virtues Such as Courage Temperance Meekness Industry are likewise kinds of Power [8] Eloquence.<sup>28</sup>

In his 1766 lectures on eloquence, Reid describes eloquence "when possessed in the highest degree" as "the Noblest and the greatest" kind of power "because it commands the passions the Affections the Judgments the purposes the Resolutions of other Men."<sup>29</sup> While on the evidence at my disposal I am not entitled to conclude that this was Reid's view fourteen years earlier in 1752, it seems reasonable to suppose that he had at least some sense of the power of eloquence to influence opinion, and perhaps even opinion of interest, when he wrote the "Scheme".

<sup>27</sup>Pt. 2 (London, 1729), p. 106; cf. p. xxi; [pt.] 1, pp. 401–402.

<sup>28</sup>The material on authority has already been quoted above.

<sup>29</sup>MS. 8/1/2, fo. 5v



While Reid thus forthrightly located prudence at the heart of politics, he was noticeably silent about the proper means of harnessing prudence to virtue. Be that as it may, Reid concluded his "Scheme" with a promise of "A View of the Different Stations in Life & the Qualities of Body & Mind & Fortune necessary to the proper Duties of them." This was, again, highly Ciceronian, which confirms the view that Reid sought to underwrite his account of authority with its Humean overtones with the anti-Pyrrhonian analysis provided by Cicero.

## 2.

Having now considered the significance of Reid's appeal to Cicero, it would be fruitful to examine closely Reid's translation of *De Officiis* Book 1, Chapters 1–15 of that work.<sup>30</sup> In turning to Cicero, Reid was not, of course, escaping entirely from scepticism, but merely mining a more profitable vein within that discourse, one less apt to yield the moral and political consequences Reid perceived (however uncharitably) to follow from Hume's unmitigated epistemological scepticism. *De Officiis* is among Cicero's dogmatic discourses, *De Finibus* being its more sceptical counterpart in the field of ethics. Cicero was concerned in *De Finibus* with establishing the rule whereby that which is honourable is necessarily beneficial, whereas in *De Officiis* he merely assumed the validity of that rule as he went about giving practical advice on moral decision-making.

Nonetheless, a certain amount of scepticism still permeates *De Officiis* on at least two levels. Firstly, Cicero's approach mitigates its own dogmatism by "using sweet reason to cajole an independent person, entitled to his own views ... , rather than putting pressure on a rather ordinary, but docile, young man [his son Marcus] whom his older cousin regarded as bullied".<sup>31</sup> Thus doubt is allowed at least some free play, and is not dismissed out of hand. "[Y]ou may freely follow your own Judgment in things," as Reid translated one such passage in which Cicero offered his counsel to Marcus, "& I give you leave to do so". Be that as it may, it was surely a very important part of Cicero's intention in *De Officiis* to give his son a wisely measured taste of the "[Art] ... of Judging."

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<sup>30</sup>The translation ends abruptly in the middle of a word in Ch. 15.

<sup>31</sup>M.T. Griffin, Introduction to *On Duties*, p. 16.

Secondly, the narrative is informed by a relatively benign epistemological scepticism (not unlike that encountered in Butler) which Cicero evidently learned from his teacher, Philo of Larissa, and according to which “one could not seek certain knowledge, but should provisionally accept the view that, after examining the arguments, seems the most persuasive.”<sup>32</sup> A probable reason, as Reid translated *ratio probabilis*, “can serve as a basis for action”,<sup>33</sup> and must do so in the case of many, and perhaps all, moral choices. Cicero seems to have had in mind here not only the so-called imperfect duties, but those as well, “whose obligation is clear & perfect”. (Reid’s translation again, apparently, at this juncture was informed by the Pufendorfian systematics he undoubtedly learned from Turnbull. Reid would rely heavily upon Pufendorf in his Glasgow lectures on jurisprudence. I will consider the issue of perfect and imperfect duties and rights in a later chapter.) However, perfect duties are to some extent immune from this sort of scepticism because, presumably, it requires a less strenuous effort of probable reasoning in order to perceive their obligation rightly. In any case, it is incumbent on us to “become good calculators of our duties” through “experience and practice”. This is of course a subject to which we alluded in our discussion of the “Scheme.”

Cicero’s teaching in *De Officiis* largely consists in devising a framework for evaluating one’s options, and in providing a casuistical formula for resolving apparent conflicts between what appears to be beneficial and what is honourable, or for coping with other uncertainties such as whether, in what way, and to what degree something is honourable, dishonourable, or beneficial “when [one is] deciding upon a plan of action.”<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, it may be noted that this entire discussion of duty calculation is expressly polemical. “[T]he opinions of Aristo Pyrrho & Herillus [i.e. Erillus] are long since exploded,” as Reid translated Cicero, because they left no cognitive basis for “choice or preference in things, by which we might be led to the discovery of our Duty”, or in other words that which is honourable. Indeed, Cicero believed that these men did not deserve the name of “philosopher”, for real philosophers maintain on a theoretical plane that what is honourable, or, to speak in Reid’s terms, virtuous, “is either solely or chiefly to be chosen for its own Sake” and then proceed to the practical business of advising us on the means of pursuing it. Such an indictment, especially of

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<sup>32</sup>Introduction to *On Duties*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>33</sup>*On Duties*, p. 5, n. 2.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 5, 24–25.

Pyrrhonian scepticism, which had lately resurfaced with a vengeance in Hume, must indeed have been welcome to Reid.

Reid's translation is revealing in other ways. His rendering of *scientia* as "principles" is a choice that hints at his view of science, starting with the philosophical orations of 1753–1762. Reid also translated *utilitas* as "Utility" and *honestas* as "Virtue"; the latter is of course quite striking when viewed in the context of the agenda of utility set by Hume and the virtue-centered response that would come from Reid and Beattie. Reid's rendering signals a conflation of the language of rights and duties with the language of virtue. This goes a long way towards explaining his later, and more explicit, synthesis of a particular type of jurisprudential reasoning with the republican form of argumentation which he learned from Turnbull. This is a subject which I shall deal with in due course.

Finally, I turn to Reid's rendering of a passage on the essential difference between human beings and animals which would have offered a bridge to the rational principles of action as a reply to Hume, although, as I have pointed out, the available evidence does not suggest that he realized this in 1752. The passage is as follows:

[Brutes] concern themselves onely about things present & so far as they affect their senses, having little or no conception of the past or future Whereas Man, because he is endued with reason, by which he traces out the causes of things and discovers their consequences discovers their mutual ties and connexions, compares things that are similar, and joyns the future to the present is thereby enabled to plan out the whole course of life & to provide things necessary for it.

Suggestive as this passage must have been, Reid does not seem to have developed his notion of the rational principles of action until a later stage of his encounter with Hume. When he restated these views in the *Active Powers* in 1788, however, it was Cicero's *De Officiis* that provided him with the supporting arguments he needed.

### 3.

The "Scheme" and Reid's translation of the opening chapters of Cicero's *De Officiis* do not exhaust the evidence that has survived of what Reid taught in the way of politics in 1751–1752; more importantly, they do not exhaust the sceptical avenues he explored, for the first of his philosophical orations is filled with high praise of Montesquieu, who had to a large extent downplayed reason and emphasized physical determinants of behaviour.

Reid opened his brief remarks on politics in Oration 1 by observing that Socrates' followers, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle "treated in a distinguished fashion politics," which, as I have shown, Reid characterized as "the most noble part of philosophy". He went on to suggest that in politics as in morals Plato "corrupted" Socrates' "pure and genuine doctrine ... with the witty contrivances of his playful genius." I have shown how Reid followed the Socratic line of descent from Xenophon to Cicero, who "set forth most elegantly the teaching of the Stoics in the three books of the *De Officiis*." (And, as I will show presently, it was through a complex combination of Ciceronian, Baconian and Newtonian lenses that Reid viewed the teachings of subsequent political writers, including Montesquieu.)

Turning from the ancients to the moderns, Reid then identified Machiavelli, Harrington and Hume as philosophers "who have been taught by the experience of past ages and the fate of the governments of both ancient and modern peoples" and who accordingly "made strong progress" in politics. But Reid reserved the highest accolade for Montesquieu,

The most illustrious leader, ... [who] is seen to outstrip all philosophers by a long distance; he is by nationality a Frenchman, by his character and zeal, a Briton. This man, instructed by the learning of the whole of history, with the keenest judgment, with Attic wit, and with Laconic brevity and weight of diction, has set forth most lucidly the causes, principles, and effects of laws, morals and politics, from the first beginnings in human nature. From the British race in particular he has well deserved the name Briton because he has taught us, who are blessed with a form of government surpassing all the governments which either history has shown forth or imagination has contrived and who are exceedingly fortunate, to recognize our own blessings and to value them highly.<sup>35</sup>

From this brief statement it is evident that Reid regarded *The Spirit of Laws* as a kind of sourcebook for the scientific study of politics, and there is at least a suggestion here of the view that politics is eminently concerned with the causes and effects of different political constitutions and the principles of action among men, although the first really detailed evidence of this comes from Reid's Glasgow lectures on politics. It would

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<sup>35</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, pp. 936–938. It is interesting that Beattie's high praise of Montesquieu both in the classroom in the early 1760s and in Volume 2 of his *Elements of Moral Science* in 1792 echo those uttered by Reid a decade earlier. Thus Beattie described Montesquieu as "the greatest politician that ever the world produced" and "the greatest political genius that ever lived" (quoted in J. Lough, "L'Esprit des Lois in a Scottish University in the Eighteenth Century," *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 13 (1944), pp. 14–15; cf. F.T.H. Fletcher, *Montesquieu and English Politics (1750–1800)* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1980), p. 50 (see also John Dalrymple, *An Essay towards a General History of Feudal Property in Great Britain* (London, 1757), pp. [iii]–iv, where Montesquieu is described as "the greatest genius of our age").



also appear that Montesquieu provided Reid with a defence of the British constitution which was perfectly consistent with the kind of high Whig doctrine espoused by Hume. While there is no solid discursive evidence of Reid's allegiance in this period, one can detect a sceptical bias in the Introduction to his *Inquiry*, where he wrote that "innovations in ... government, are always suspected and disliked by the many, til use hath made them familiar, and prescription hath given them a title."<sup>36</sup>

For a man of his time, Reid was not doing anything unusual in reading Montesquieu. *Esprit des Lois*, first published in 1748 and translated into English by Thomas Nugent in 1750, proved enormously popular in Scotland. The Edinburgh publisher Hamilton and Balfour produced a new French edition in 1750 and also made available a pamphlet containing *Two Chapters of a Celebrated French Work, Intitled, "De L'Esprit des Loix"*, which I believe was edited by Hume.<sup>37</sup> At least four other Edinburgh editions of Montesquieu's book,<sup>38</sup> one Dumfries edition<sup>39</sup> and one Glasgow edition<sup>40</sup> were also published in this period. Another edition was brought out by Douglass and Murray of Aberdeen in 1756, almost certainly to fill a need created by Reid at King's and by Reid's counterpart at Marischal, Alexander Gerard (1728–1795).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>*Works*, p. 99a. It should be pointed out that in this passage Reid was using Hume's own passage against him in the area of innovations in language.

<sup>37</sup>Montesquieu had favoured Hume with a presentation copy, to which he replied with a detailed set of remarks. (See H to M, 10 Apr 1749, in J.Y.T. Greig, ed., *The Letters of David Hume*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 133–138.) An unsigned footnote attached to a passage in Book 11, Chapter 6 relating to the origins of the British constitution, which sounds suspiciously Humean in its sceptical Whig overtones, imputed an esoteric motive to Montesquieu. The author of the note suggested that when Montesquieu wrote that his reading of Tacitus' *De Moribus Germanorum* gave him the idea that "This fine system hath been found in the woods" he thereby "couched ... an opinion a Frenchman dare scarce avow, that this happy establishment was secured at the revolution of 1688, concerted by the lovers of British liberty, and the Prince of Orange, at his house of the Wood, and afterwards completed by the accession of the præsent German family" (p. 18). It is known that Hume had been instrumental "in some unknown manner" in getting this pamphlet into print (Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 229; cf. p. 232).

<sup>38</sup>4th ed., 1768; 10th ed., 1773; 7th ed., 1778 and the Thomas Ruddiman edition of 1793.

<sup>39</sup>3rd ed., 1762.

<sup>40</sup>1793.

<sup>41</sup>Indeed *The Spirit of Laws* seems to have been a staple of the philosophy course at King's and Marischal Colleges from the 1750s to the 1790s. Robert Morgan's notes from Alexander Gerard's lectures on pneumatics, ethics and logic, 1758–1759, for example, contain several characteristically Montesquieuan passages. All of these passages come under the general heading of natural jurisprudence in Morgan's notes, but are scattered throughout the different parts of that subject, i.e. private jurisprudence, economics and politics (see EUL MS. Dc.5.117, pp. 244, 376–377, 442–473, 481). Here also we find absolutely standard references to the influence of soil and climate and the revolutionary account of forms of government.

To read the Advertisement to the Douglass and Murray edition one would almost think that the publisher had undertaken to prepare a new translation of *De L'Esprit des Loix*.<sup>42</sup> In fact the Aberdeen edition appears to have been simply an amended Nugent translation, corrected against the text of the new French edition of 1750.<sup>43</sup> Slightly more adventurous was the decision to cut the translator's preface, which spoke to the charges of irreligion that had been made against Montesquieu: "To us it appears a most absurd practice to load works of character with trifling or malignant criticisms", the Advertisement ran, "and we hope our readers will approve of our conduct in omitting the silly objections made to the Spirit of Laws, and the answers."<sup>44</sup>

Montesquieu's materialism in *The Spirit of Laws* was at best thinly disguised. For him, the laws of matter and motion, not God's will and grace, were primary. God governed the world by fixed rules and "invariable laws", but the world itself was "formed by the motion of matter" and without the laws of matter and motion "it could not subsist." God, who rules the universe "as creator and preserver", is paradoxically constrained by rules of his own making, though not of his own design. The laws by which he acts are merely "relative to his wisdom and power", not commanded by him in his omnipotence.<sup>45</sup>

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Gerard would go on to publish an unfinished paper by Montesquieu on taste as an appendix to his own *Essay on Taste* (Edinburgh, 1764). Montesquieu's "Essay on Taste" occupies pp. [245]–298. Gerard also proposed the following Humean/Montesquieuan question in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, or "Wise Club," of which he and Reid were members: "Whether national characters depend upon physical or moral causes, or whether they are influenced by both." This item was handled on 26 Feb 1771, i.e. some years after Reid's departure (see the list of questions printed in James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, p. 472).

Three other Wise Club members who turned Montesquieu's doctrines to account were James Beattie (1735–1803), James Dunbar (1719–1798) and George Campbell (1719–1796). Beattie, who studied under Gerard in 1753 and succeeded him seven years later, appropriated Montesquieu's account of the origins of slavery in Book 15, Chapters 2–5 of the *Spirit of Laws* and latched on to Montesquieu's discussion of the English constitution in Book 11, Chapter 6. Moreover, Beattie's review of the various forms of government, like Gerard's before him, was thoroughly Montesquieuan. Campbell, for his part, adopted Montesquieu's account of the origins of slavery in his book *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* which appeared in 1776. And, last but certainly not least, Dunbar, who had been a student at King's during Reid's tenure there and was himself appointed regent and professor of philosophy at King's the year after Reid left in 1765, published his Montesquieuan *Essays on the History of Mankind in Rude and Cultivated Ages* in 1780.

<sup>42</sup>The final paragraph of the Advertisement reads in part as follows: "The peculiarity of the author's stile makes a good translation no easy task. We hope no material fault will be found in this edition. By comparing this with the former English edition the reader will observe several inaccuracies corrected, and some palpable mistakes rectified" (pp. [iii]–[iv]).

<sup>43</sup>Judging from a comparison with the second edition of Nugent's translation (London, 1752) and the French of the Edinburgh edition of 1750.

<sup>44</sup>p. [iii].

<sup>45</sup>2nd ed., trans. [Thomas] Nugent, vol. 1 (London, 1752), p. 2.



Still, such views would not have been entirely repugnant to a good Newtonian like Reid and it is tempting to suggest that it was Reid himself who inspired the Advertisement to Douglass and Murray's edition of *The Spirit of Laws*.<sup>46</sup> Reid had, after all, been teaching *The Spirit of Laws* for a few years by the time the Aberdeen edition of that work appeared. The hypothesis that Reid would have been well known to the bookseller-publishers of a small centre like Aberdeen and could have been consulted on the publication of the book is certainly possible. (It is interesting that Douglass would later become active in the Gordon's Mill Farming Club, of which Reid was a member.)

While there is no direct evidence that Reid was the author of the Advertisement cited above, it is known that when he lectured on ethics in the Aberdeen period he averred that "The Deity himself acts by Laws or Rules".<sup>47</sup> And when he was teaching at Glasgow seven years after Douglass and Murray's edition appeared, Reid would ruefully remark that "Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Loix* was burnt in France & he as well as the other best political writers of that Nation do not chuse to own what they write",<sup>48</sup> a sentiment in some sympathy with the Advertisement.

But while Reid did not dismiss the notion of a law-abiding God, he was less prepared to accept Montesquieu's view of the relative lawlessness of the mundane realm as expressed in the latter's assertion that

the intelligent world is far from being so well governed as the physical. For tho' the former has also its laws which of their own nature are invariable, yet it does not conform to them so exactly as the physical world. This is because on the one hand particular intelligent beings are of a finite nature and consequently liable to error; and on the other, their nature requires them to be free agents. Hence they do not steadily conform to their primitive laws; and even those of their own instituting they frequently infringe.<sup>49</sup>

In his Aberdeen lectures Reid recoiled from such suggestions, protesting that "It cannot be imagined by any Reasonable Man that the Deity who himself acts always according to the best & wisest Rules or Laws it cannot I say be imagined that the Deity

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<sup>46</sup>Cf. John Lough, "The Relations of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (1758–73) with France," *Aberdeen University Review*, vol. 30, no. 89 (Summer 1943), p. 147: "perhaps the anonymous preface to this edition was the work of one of the future members of the Philosophical Society."

<sup>47</sup>MS. 7/V/1, fo. 1r.

<sup>48</sup>MS. 4/III/8, fo. 1r.

<sup>49</sup>2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 3.

has left human Actions without any Rule without any Law to be guided by chance or Caprice." After all, "All Nature is subject to Laws".<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, in Oration 1 Reid attempted to uphold Montesquieu's position without opening the door to lawlessness. Arguing against the potential atheism of Grotius, Montesquieu reasoned that the "laws by which [God] created all things ... [and] by which he preserves them" were principles of action for him because he "knows them". He knew these rules because he "made them ... and he made them because they are relative to his wisdom and power."<sup>51</sup> This formula, which underwrote Montesquieu's deism, was echoed by Reid:

the supreme Poet, the Maker of all things and the all-powerful Ruler, while he was establishing the first beginnings of the Universe, proposed laws for himself that were in keeping with his wisdom and goodness. And he continues to rule both the material and rational world by the wisest and most favourable laws and the investigation of these laws comprises the principal and most noble part of philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

Any imposition theory which was going to be acceptable to Reid would have to be premised upon the existence of a God who was really in command and who had equipped us to obey him.

I have not yet dealt with Montesquieu's well-known historicism and relativism. These are of course familiar retreats of the sceptic and need not be reviewed here. What concerns us is Reid's response to these themes and his position in this period on Montesquieu's materialism. While Reid was, as we have shown, sympathetic to certain elements of Montesquieu's mechanistic theory, and, as we shall see, hardly opposed to historicism and relativism as such, he was quite critical of the subversion of moral causes that it entailed.

In his lectures on ethics in this period, Reid suggested that "The Characters [of men are] owing to the different Strength or Weakness of the Principles of Action in different persons." These strengths and weaknesses, in turn, are attributable "Chiefly to Education Example & Custom" but also "To Natural Temperament ... difference of Fortune & Condition ... Difference of Age ... Unaccountable Distempers of the Mind such as Melancholy ... Enthusiasm. and Hypochondriac." Reid apparently also

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<sup>50</sup>MS. 7/V/1, fo. 1r-v.

<sup>51</sup>Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, p. 933.

speculated as to “How far Differences of Climate Influence Mens Characters. Opinions of D. Hume & Montesquieu”.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, Reid did not record his thoughts on this subject here.

But in a related paper, apparently dating from the Aberdeen period and headed “Q. To What Causes are the Differences in Character among Men Owing?”, he began somewhat sceptically, suggesting that “How far Mens Character which they bring into the World with them is influenced by that of their immediate or Remote Parents. by the Conduct and Regimen of Mothers in Conception & Gestation. by Climate & Air is perhaps a Matter that we have not sufficient Data to Determine”. But a couple of pages later he conceded

that warm Climates indispose more to labour & render it less necessary & furnish more the means of Luxury & effeminacy. That both Men & Women ripen sooner in warm Climates especially the latter. The passions of Love & Jealousy and all the train they bring along with them may be more furious in such Climates & be less ballanced by Reason & Experience[.] And as the period of Old Age when the Passions give way to caution & Reflexion comes sooner & lasts longer so more of cunning may be expected as the affect of a Warm Climate.<sup>54</sup>

Reid’s remarks on this occasion would appear to owe much to Book 5, Chapter 15 of *The Spirit of Laws*,<sup>55</sup> and to Hume’s essay “Of National Characters.”<sup>56</sup> But they are Humean overall, allocating the absolute minimum efficacy to the influence of climate.

Moreover, Reid left behind an abstract of a discussion he led in the Wise Club on 12 June 1759 on the question of “Whether Mankind with regard to Morals always was and is the same” in which he opposed different varieties of scepticism and scarcely cloaked a criticism of Montesquieu that would probably have found favour even with Hume himself. While it is not known for certain whether, or to what extent, echoes of this conversation were heard in Reid’s lectures at King’s, the abstract at least gives us some insight into Reid’s thoughts. In any case, as it is the only evidence that we have to go on in this particular, it would therefore seem appropriate to review this material here.

“If This Question is determined in the Affirmative,” Reid began,

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<sup>53</sup>MS. 7/V/23, p. [8].

<sup>54</sup>MS. 6/IV/2, fos 1v, 2v.

<sup>55</sup>2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 90.

<sup>56</sup>*Essays*, p. 213.

all Attempts to make men better must be as vain and fantastical as an Attempt to teach them to fly or to make them ten cubits high. Neither Legislators nor Magistrates nor Publick teachers nor private Instructors nor Parents nor Masters ought ever to think of bettering the Morals of those under their Care. Yet it is very common for those who value themselves upon what they call the knowledge of Mankind to sneer at any project for the reformation of Morals in a Nation or among mankind in general.

In the face of these disastrous consequences and with the firm conviction that this opinion “does not appear to be supported by any evident or probable Arguments,” whether “By the fairest conjectures we can form”, or by reason, experience or analogy, Reid endeavoured to attack the very assumptions of sceptics and fatalists alike. For Reid, reason, experience and analogy conspire to show “that mens Characters depend greatly upon their Opinions, the Examples that are dayly before them, the Habits they acquire”, while the most probable conjectures we can form are sufficient to disqualify such vain imaginings and improper analogies as the following: “that the increase of Virtue and Morals in one Place can either be a cause or an Effect of its decrease in another”, “that the whole course of human Affairs and Characters [is] ruled by the Stars”, or that “the Miracles of J Christ progress and Establishment of Christianity the rise & progress of Opinions and Philosophies [are owing] to the Conjunctions & Oppositions of the Planets.” The full-blown doctrines of Montesquieu are likewise excluded as untenable, for here “The Climate Soil & Air have [merely] been Substituted in place of the Planets and Astrological Houses.”

I shall have occasion to say more about the strategy Reid employed to combat Montesquieu's materialism later. What is significant at this point is the particular brand of moral and political scepticism which Reid himself employed to chase out materialism and bad science in his abstract. Apparently harkening back to his 1748 “Essay on Quantity,” but quickly going beyond anything he said in that piece, Reid confessed “We have not data to compute the Quantity or Sum of virtue that hath been in the World in different periods of time. By the fairest conjections we can form it hath been very different at different times in the same family, at the same Court, in the same Nation, nay in many neighbouring Nations.”<sup>57</sup> Here Reid would have found himself an ally of Hume against Montesquieu, for in his “Of National Characters” (1748) Hume downplayed the influence of physical causes and emphasized that of moral causes.<sup>58</sup> So, just as he had given some ground to the sceptics in proposing

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<sup>57</sup>MS. 4/1/22, fo. 1r-v.

<sup>58</sup>See *Essays*, pp. 200, 203–204, 207–208, 213.

Cicero as an alternative to Hume and Mandeville on the question of opinion and interest, Reid now effectively allied himself with Hume against Montesquieu on the issue of materialism. It is interesting to note that what both of these cases show is just how far Reid had to enter into the discourse of his opponents in order to distance himself from those views of which he disapproved. This is a recurring pattern in the development of Reid's political thought and reveals one of the ways in which scientific advance is mediated by encounters with scepticism.

## Chapter 5

### Institutionalizing Hume's Agenda for the Science of Man

In May 1752, i.e. soon after the 1751–1752 term ended, Reid was busy reading Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* and Lord Kames' *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, both of which had been published in the previous year. Reid therefore seems to have delayed little in subjecting both to his scrutiny. There exists in Reid's hand a four-page abstract and a page of "Observations" relating to Hume's new work and a further page of notes on Kames' latest effort.<sup>1</sup> I shall begin with Reid's notes on Hume.

Hume had recast the unashamedly Pyrrhonian elements of the *Treatise* (a book which he formally disowned in 1777) in his more accessible *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), and in some ways he toned down his sceptical agenda even further in the second *Enquiry*. This recasting evidently appealed to Reid, for he copied the following from Hume in the first few lines of his abstract:

Those who refuse the Reality of Moral Distinctions may be reckoned Disingenuous Disputants. The Difference which Nature has placed betwixt one Man and Another is So wide that where the Opposite Extremes come at once under our Apprehension there is no Scepticism so Scrupulous and scarce any Assurance so determined as absolutely to deny all Distinction betwixt them.

Although Reid's notes consist largely of paraphrase and his accompanying "Observations," while highly suggestive, amount to little more than a series of methodological precautions, they do help to indicate the kinds of things that may have informed his thinking about politics at this time, whether or not they ever found their way into the classroom. Most important for my purposes are his notes from Sections 3–4 of Hume's second *Enquiry*.

Reid followed Hume very closely through Section 3, Part 1, on the origin of justice, and quoted without comment Hume's conclusion that "History, Experience, Reason Sufficiently instruct us in [the] Natural Progress of human Sentiments, & the Gradual Encrease of our Regards to Property & Justice, in Proportion as we become acquainted with the extensive Utility of that Virtue." Reid took less copious notes

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<sup>1</sup>MS. 3/1/23, fos 1r–3v.



from Part 2, on the rules of justice, but recorded, again without remark, Hume's challenge to "Examine the Writers on the Laws of Nature you will find that whatever Principle they set out with, they are sure to terminate at last in the Convenience & Necessity of Mankind as the Ultimate Reason for every Rule they establish."

These are of course extremely sceptical statements and a record of Reid's reaction to them would add greatly to our knowledge of his political thought in this period. It is known that a few years later, on 22 November 1758, the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, led by Reid, spoke to the question "Is Justice a Natural or an Artificial Virtue?", which, as Reid acknowledged, "respects Mr Hume Notions of Justice". On this occasion Reid observed "that Gratitude and Resentment are natural Ingredients in the Frame of a Human Mind no less than the Appetites of Hunger and Thirst. And that those affections are as naturally excited by their proper Objects & Occasions as those Appetites". He suggested, moreover, that "in every state of Mankind in which there is either Gratitude for good Offices or Resentment of Injuries there must be notions of Justice."<sup>2</sup> Thus at this juncture Reid managed to head Hume off at the pass, meeting his sceptical challenge without even directly addressing himself to the question of public utility. He would discourse at length on this subject, but not until he was preparing the *Active Powers* for the press decades later.

Reid was silent, too, on Hume's criticism of Montesquieu's relativism in Part 2 of the *Enquiry*. Montesquieu "supposes all Right to be founded on certain *Rapports* or Relations; which is a System," Hume said, "that, in my Opinion, never will reconcile with true Philosophy."<sup>3</sup> However, this is a criticism with which Reid would have had sympathy, if not at the time, then at least from 1766 onwards, as I will demonstrate. Reid's apparent lack of engagement on this point is somewhat surprising given his interest in Montesquieu at the time.

Unfortunately, Reid wrote down almost nothing with regard to Section 4, on the advantage of political society. What he did write amounts to little more than a summary of the contents of the section: "Submission to Laws Allegiance. Law of Nations. Reason of State Chastity Unlawfulness of Incest, Laws of Good Manners, Gallantry, Roads Duels &c founded on Utility". He made no comment on Hume's claim that "All Politicians will allow, and most Philosophers, that reasons of state

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<sup>2</sup>MS. 6/1/9, fos 1r, 2r.

<sup>3</sup>*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London, 1751), p. 55, n.; cf. *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd. ed., ed. P.H. Niddich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; hereinafter *Enquiries*), p. 197, n. 1.

may, in particular Emergencies, dispense with the Rules of Justice".<sup>4</sup> His views on this question, like his other views on the subject of justice, were not articulated until much later. Like his other ideas on the subject of justice, Reid's opinion on this question was that the rules of justice are inviolable; reasons of state must conform to these rules or they are not true reasons of state.

Kames' book was conceived as a reply to Hume, but its highly mechanistic and necessitarian overtones were no doubt anathema to Reid and apparently spurred him on to work out his own reply. Reid's notes show that he was concerned with the scope of the principle of benevolence in human nature, which is not surprising given his long-standing interest in the debate on the passions. "There is no such Principle in human Nature as General Benevolence", Reid wrote. "Our Nature leads us to love our Relations, Friends, Neighbours; Our Benevolence is farther Extended by Means of General Names that signifie some Relation of others to us Such as sameness of Religion Government Name, &c." More significantly, at least for our present purposes, they also reveal that Reid was thinking about issues clearly related to the question of liberty versus necessity, although there is nothing like a sustained discussion here of the extent to which human actions are free or necessary. This deficiency is regrettable, but later in this period Reid would make references to and lecture on the subject in a way that clearly demonstrates that he had a familiarity with both Hume and Kames on this question.

This was unavoidable: in the mid-1750s there was much controversy surrounding the issue. The sceptical writings of the atheistic Hume, and the necessitarian doctrines of his kinsman Henry Home, the future Lord Kames, brought them into conflict with the high-flying clergy. Hume was accused of heresy, and Kames, apparently being tarred with the same brush, was under threat of censure as well. The Minister of Perth, John Bonar (an evangelical who had a bone to pick with the Moderate clergymen whom he held responsible for deposing his friend and fellow evangelical Thomas Gillespie in 1752 and blocking his reinstatement in 1753)<sup>5</sup> published *An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments Contained in the Writings of Sopho [i.e. Kames] and David Hume*,<sup>6</sup> which he addressed to the members of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for their consideration. Hume's friend, the Moderate Hugh Blair, replied

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<sup>4</sup>*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>See Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), p. 67.

<sup>6</sup>Edinburgh, 1755.

with his critical *Observations* upon this pamphlet<sup>7</sup> and Blair, assisted by fellow Moderates Robert Wallace, George Wishart and Robert Hamilton, then came to Kames' defence in a third pamphlet, *Objections Against the Essays on Morality and Natural Religion Examined*.<sup>8</sup>

Against this background, I now examine briefly the views of Hume and Kames on liberty and necessity. "There is a general course of nature in human actions," Hume wrote in Book 2 of the *Treatise*,

as well as in the operations of the sun and climate. There are also characters peculiar to different nations and particular persons, as well as common to mankind. The knowledge of these characters is founded on the observation of an uniformity in these actions, that flow from them; and this uniformity forms the very essence of necessity.

"[A]nd whatever capricious and irregular actions we may perform;" Hume continued, "as the desire of showing our liberty is the sole motive of our actions; we can never free ourselves from the bonds of necessity." By necessity Hume meant motives, and he endeavoured to prove "that reason alone can never be a motive to ... action".<sup>9</sup>

On Kames' view, "no mortal ever came to a determination, without the influence of some motive or other." But since "motives are not under our power or direction, ... we can, at bottom, have no liberty. We are so constituted," Kames went on to say,

that we cannot exert a single action, but with some view, aim or purpose. At the same time, when two opposite motives present themselves, we have not the power of an arbitrary choice. We are directed, by a necessary determination of our nature, to prefer the strongest motive.

Thus Kames dismissed our "feeling" of liberty as a mere self-deception inherent in our nature.<sup>10</sup>

In lecture notes which appear to date from his time at King's, Reid replied directly to this sceptical reasoning. Hume and Kames had argued that in their actions people are necessarily determined by the strongest motive; this is what gives authority to our reasoning from their motives to their actions. They felt that the alternative to this view

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<sup>7</sup>*Observations upon a Pamphlet, Intituled, "An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments Contained in the Writings of Sopho, and David Hume"* (Edinburgh, 1755).

<sup>8</sup>Edinburgh, 1756.

<sup>9</sup>Pp. 402–403, 408, 413.

<sup>10</sup>*Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh, 1751), pp. 162, 167–169.

would be that people's actions are utterly capricious, which of course would mean that we could not possibly predict their actions or reason about their behaviour. Hume, at least, was obliged to fall back on necessity to underwrite probable reasoning (and reasoning from people's motives to their actions is a species of probable reasoning) because he had undercut the foundation of opinion in the *Treatise*. His recourse to determinism was apparently in the same spirit as his reliance on necessity in the form of the passions to break the force of his Pyrrhonian scepticism. Reid, who as I have shown never doubted the authority of probable reasoning, countered Hume's (and Kames's) argument by pointing out that (unaccountable) caprice is not the only logical alternative to determinism, for freedom does not necessarily entail caprice. He suggested that it would be possible to reason from people's characters to their actions. In other words, "the Supposition of freedom [does not take] away all Wisdom Prudence & all Distinction of Characters".<sup>11</sup> Reid formally addressed himself to the problem of liberty on at least two other occasions in the Aberdeen period. He wrote a piece which seems to have been apropos of Dr David Skene's question "How far human actions are free or necessary?", discussed by the Aberdeen Philosophical Society on 24 May and 14 June 1758, and took up the matter again in a slightly different form in the abstract that survives of his own question "Does Moral Character consist in Affections and Dispositions which are involuntary; or in fixed Purposes & Determinations of the Will which influence the Conduct?", dealt with by the Wise Club on 15 April 1761.

In the first of these papers, Reid criticized "two modern Advocates of fatalism", probably Hume and Kames, for assuming without proof "that a mans Character in morals is a thing altogether involuntary and that the Will is onely exercised in transient acts, but not in anything that can be called Character." Reid, for his part, was convinced that character consists in "permanent Acts of the Will", such as the virtue of justice, "a constant & perpetual Will or purpose, to give every man his due." He believed, moreover, that far from being ~~being~~ determined by the strongest motive in any given action, we very often exercise our prerogative of "self-denial," which implies "a painfull struggle against a strong inclination".<sup>12</sup> Reid reiterated these opinions a few years later in the second paper under review:

Moral character depends not indeed upon transient and momentary Volitions but in fixed and habitual determinations of the Will which are

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<sup>11</sup>MS. 7/V/23.

<sup>12</sup>MS. 6/I/16, fos 1v-2r.

far a more Stable and firm basis for Character to rest upon than the involuntary impulses of Passion & Affection which are in a perpetual flux and never almost the same for two days of Life.<sup>13</sup>

On this occasion, and no doubt on the previous one as well, Skene took Hume's part. He argued on the system of necessity reviewed above that human conduct "may be explained in a satisfactory way from the influence of Passions Affections & Inclinations, variously modified & combin'd".<sup>14</sup> Clearly, Humean scepticism was alive among Reid's acquaintance at Aberdeen. Gerard seems to have accepted Hume's theory of ideas without quibble and to have taught it in the classroom in 1757–1758, as can be seen from a set of student notes from his lectures on metaphysics,<sup>15</sup> adding an uncritical dimension to the entrenchment of scepticism with its consequences for opinion and its necessitarian implications; this must have troubled Reid just as much as Skene's more considered allegiance.

Thus far I have been reviewing the intellectual development of a man who found himself caught up in a floodtide of scepticism and who made the most of his training and erudition in order to hold back some ground from the erosive currents of the age. And while his interest in contemporary moral and political issues up to this point can hardly be described as casual, it is nevertheless true that his engagement with these questions was largely reactive. The demands of teaching were beginning to change that. I have already shown how Reid tried to reconcile Hume with Cicero in the hope of generating a flexible account of duties, one able to withstand the pressures of modern scepticism precisely because it was firmly rooted in sceptical soil. I have also shown how he turned to Montesquieu, another sceptic, but with a less problematic agenda than that coolly laid out by the intrepid Hume, for his account of law and politics. But Reid's use of Cicero and Montesquieu was much more than a kind of deferral to scepticism; it was, rather, part of a new and decidedly scientific direction in Reid's thought. Reid was now becoming more pro-active in his battle with the sceptics and making ready to examine the mind afresh and to write systematically on pneumatology, ethics and politics in a way that he had never done before.

Reid's first step was a big one: to restructure the arts curriculum according to his new conception of the science of mind, and to remodel the institution itself in order to

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<sup>13</sup>MS. 2/II/13, fo. 4v.

<sup>14</sup>AUL MS. 475/11, p. 130.

<sup>15</sup>See N.T. Phillipson, "James Beattie and the Defence of Common Sense," in Bernhard Fabian, *Festschrift für Rainer Gruenter* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978), p. 149.



facilitate this task.<sup>16</sup> As I pointed out at the outset, the curriculum under which Reid taught in 1751–1752, his first year as a professor, was in its scholastic framework essentially the same as the one in which he himself had been schooled: Greek in the first year; logic in the second; ontology, pneumatics, morals and politics in the third; and natural philosophy in the fourth.<sup>17</sup>

Marischal College introduced reforms into their antiquated curriculum early in 1753. While no changes were made to the first-year syllabus, the philosophy course, i.e. the syllabus for years 2–4, was dramatically restructured and its content broadened. Logic, the main second-year subject under the old curriculum, was moved to the fourth year. The second year was now to be taken up with lectures on natural and civil history, geography, chronology and mathematics (which was henceforth to be continued in years 3–4 as well). The order of natural and experimental philosophy on the one hand and moral philosophy on the other was reversed, natural and experimental philosophy now being introduced in the third year and moral philosophy in the fourth. Tertians (third-year students) were henceforth also to be taught criticism and *belles-lettres*. The new Professor of Moral Philosophy, Alexander Gerard, who was undoubtedly the principal architect of these reforms, gave the rationale for these changes in his *Plan of Education in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen*.<sup>18</sup> He stressed the “great inconveniencies” attending the old system whereby

The student must make a transition at once from words and languages to Philosophy, without being previously introduced to the knowledge of facts, the sole foundation of, and preparation for it; he must be hurried, at the first, into the most abstruse, difficult and subtle parts of it; he must be put upon examining the nature, foundation and different kinds of evidence and reasoning, before he is acquainted with any specimens of these kinds, by which they may be illustrated.

According to the order of instruction embodied in the new curriculum, by contrast, “the sciences ... follow[ed] one another, according to the natural connexion of the subjects, and the gradual openings of the human mind” and were therefore better

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<sup>16</sup>I.e. by extending the length of the academic term, consolidating some of the smaller bursaries, etc.

<sup>17</sup>This was the curriculum at King’s prior to 1753; that at Marischal in the same period was slightly more involved, and included, among other subjects, arithmetic in the first year and geometry in the second (see Paul Wood, “Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher,” p. 59).

<sup>18</sup>Aberdeen, 1755.



adapted for transmitting “more real knowledge, and that more useful for the various purposes of human life”.<sup>19</sup>

King’s College soon followed suit in this restructuring bid, and Reid was appointed to a committee struck on 23 March 1753 to consider “proposals for the better Regulating the Discipline of the College & Improving the plan of Education”.<sup>20</sup> The committee made a number of recommendations.<sup>21</sup> One regulation of interest here related to discipline. The committee recommended the enforcement of an old regulation, which had fallen into disuse but had not been officially rescinded, requiring all students to live in college rather than in private accommodation. Writing to a somewhat anxious parent a couple of years after this regulation started to be enforced again, Reid reassured him of the panoptic character of supervision at Kings:

While the students were scattered over the town in private quarters, and might dispose of themselves as they pleased but at school hours, we found it impossible to keep them from low or bad company, if they were so disposed. But they are on a very different footing since they lived within the college: we need not but look out at our windows to see when they rise and when they go to bed, They are seen nine or ten times throughout the day statedly by one or other of the masters — at publick prayers, school hours, meals, and in their rooms; besides occasional visits, which we can make with little trouble to ourselves. They are shut up within walls at nine at night. We charge those that are known to be trusty and diligent with the oversight of such as we suspect to be otherwise; and verily I believe there are few boys so narrowly lookt after, or so little exposed to temptations to vice, at home as with us at present.<sup>22</sup>

This concern with discipline reminds us of the typically Moderate view of this life being one of discipline and improvement that Reid learned from Turnbull. The public instructor, like the parent, the magistrate and the preacher were therefore concerned to inculcate morals and encourage the practice of virtue.

A second regulation of interest here related to the retention of the system of regenting in preference to the adoption of the professorial system. The purpose of this rule was again to safeguard the morals of the students. “Every Professor of Philosophy in this University is also Tutor to those who study under him, has the whole Direction of

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<sup>19</sup>Pp. 5–7.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Wood, “Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher,” p. 61.

<sup>21</sup>See “Notes by D<sup>r</sup>. [William] Knight” (Professor of Natural Philosophy at Marischal College and University; 1786–2844) enclosed in Alexander Thomson of Banchory to Sir William Hamilton, 16 May 1837, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 71r–v.

<sup>22</sup>R to Archibald Dunbar, 4 Sept 1755, in *Alma Mater*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Oct 1902), p. 62.

their studies, the Training of their Minds, and the Oversight of their Manners; and it seems to be generally agreed that it must be detrimental to a Student to change his Tutor every Session.”<sup>23</sup> It is not hard to see the connection between the obsessive concern with manners and morals we find in these regulations and the erosive pressure exerted on these things by the increasingly anonymous commercial society whose mingling of ranks and moral outlooks demanded prudent role-playing and expressed the moral relativism so elegantly “methodized and corrected” (to recontextualize a phrase of Hume’s) along Ciceronian lines in *The Spectator*.<sup>24</sup>

But the most important proposal that came out of Reid’s committee concerned the restructuring of the curriculum. Greek was still to be studied in the first year but its study was to be continued in the second year, which was otherwise taken up with mathematics (continued in the third year) and natural history. In the third year natural and experimental philosophy would also be taught. Finally, the fourth year was “to be employed in the Philosophy of the Human mind and the Sciences that Depend Upon it.” Copies of an “Abstract” containing this regulation (which is thought to have been written by Reid) were duly “Printed and ... Distributed among the Alumni & Wellwishers of the College.” In the following year the College responded to their inquiries by offering “Some Eclaircissement Upon the Business of the third Year of the Philosophy Course”. The minutes of 6 April 1754 record that clarification, no doubt also written by Reid:

By the Philosophy of the Mind is Understood, An Account of the constitution of the Human mind, and of All its powers and Faculties, whether Sensitive, Intellectual or Moral; The Improvements they are capable off [*sic*], and the Means of their Improvement, of the Mutual Influences of Body & mind on each Other; and of the knowledge we may Acquire of Other Minds, And Particularly of the Supreme mind. And the Sciences depending on the Philosophy of the mind, Are Understood to be Logic, Rhetorick The Laws of Nature and Nations, Politicks, Oeconomicks, the fine Arts and Natural Religion.<sup>25</sup>

The new curriculum follows Reid’s “Scheme” almost to the letter, thus giving credence to the traditional view that he was the driving force behind it.<sup>26</sup> Still, the omission of ethics is rather curious, although I suspect that ethics was for Reid

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<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Robert Sangster Rait, *The Universities of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen: James Gordon Bisset, 1895), p. 201.

<sup>24</sup>See Phillipson, *Hume*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup>Minutes of Meetings of Principal, Masters and Members of King’s College, AUL MS. K 43, pp. 366, 373, 395.

<sup>26</sup>See Rait, pp. 202–203.

included under the catch-all of the laws of nature and nations. This in itself is interesting, however, for it underlines the natural-law inheritance that I observed in Reid's translation of Cicero. On the other hand, the term "ethics" did appear in Reid's "Scheme," as I pointed out above. All of this might perhaps lead us to the conclusion that in institutional terms at least, the tradition of the modern natural lawyers was more immediate than, or at least preferred to, that of the schoolmen. King's also gave its regents a certain leeway in the organization of their lectures,<sup>27</sup> and Reid apparently took advantage of this by taking a more comprehensive view of the law of nature and nations.

To return to the regulations, they were, like the "Scheme" itself, drafted at an early stage of Reid's encounter with Humean scepticism. It is clear that Reid was much indebted to Hume, not only for the language of opinion discussed earlier but also for his conception of "the science of Man". Obviously, stemming the tide of scepticism could not be accomplished without deferring to Hume; for one thing, Hume was too good a scientist to be ignored. "'Tis evident," Hume wrote in the Introduction to the *Treatise*,

that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of Man; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties. ...

If therefore the sciences of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, have such a dependence on the knowledge of man, what may be expected in the other sciences, whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate? The sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas: morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments: and politics consider men as united in society, and dependent on each other. In these four sciences of Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics, is comprehended almost every thing, which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, no evidence has survived to show whether at the time Reid acknowledged his debt to Hume in institutionalizing the latter's agenda for the science of man in the reformed Aberdeen curriculum; however, in the introductory lecture that

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<sup>27</sup>See *Abstract of Some Statutes and Orders of King's College in Old Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1754), p. 19.

<sup>28</sup>Vol. 1 (London, 1739), pp. 4–5.

Reid prefixed to his course as a whole every year at Glasgow, he explicitly credited Hume with this formulation. But he was quick to point out that “as M<sup>r</sup> Humes sceptical System is all built upon a wrong & mistaken Account of the intellectual Powers of Man, so it can onely be refuted by giving a true Account of them.”<sup>29</sup> And while the evidence for the genesis of this opinion is incomplete, it does show that Reid would have been fully capable of making a remark like this possibly as early as 1752, when he wrote the “Scheme,” and certainly by July<sup>30</sup> 1758, when the Aberdeen Philosophical Society discussed his question “Are the Objects of the human Mind properly divided into impressions and Ideas? and must every Idea be a Copy of a preceeding Impression.”<sup>31</sup> More than this I cannot say, but there is absolutely no evidence that Reid ever was a committed Humean.

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<sup>29</sup>See MS. 7/V/4, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>13 and 26.

<sup>31</sup>MS. 6/I/11, fo. 1r.

## Chapter 6

### Returning to First Principles: Bacon and Cicero

With the exception of two manuscripts which I will consider shortly, I have exhausted the clear evidence of what Reid was teaching in the classroom during his tenure at Aberdeen. As I move on in this period there is a considerable amount of manuscript material relating to the development of Reid's moral and political thought, in the Philosophical Orations and in surviving abstracts and discourses deriving from Reid's participation in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (Wise Club). This material may or may not have been used in the classroom, but it is hard to believe that the evolution in Reid's thought revealed in successive orations would not have informed his teaching. There is every indication that Reid's curriculum reform had been readily accepted, and as these reforms were entirely consistent with his own philosophical views, it would seem that there would have been no advantage for him to teach one thing while he believed another. In the Glasgow period Reid appears to have made use of certain Wise Club abstracts in his lectures. It would not seem unreasonable to suppose that he made use of them in his Aberdeen lectures as well.

As I observed in the last chapter, Reid effectively implemented Turnbull's long-overdue educational reforms, taking into account the agenda for the science of man set out by Hume. I now turn to Reid's methodological thinking in this period, the orientation of which clearly owes much in its influences to Turnbull.

At least by 1758–1759 Reid was trying to give his own account of the science of man, one that would not disturb the place Hume had made for it at the center of the sciences but which would nevertheless overturn the system on which it was built. The elements involved in Reid's methodological synthesis were Baconian and Ciceronian, and these were situated in a frame that would accommodate his Butlerian biases.

The Baconian element, long familiar to commentators on Reid's published writings who have regarded Reid (much as he conceived himself) as someone who applied and refined Bacon's methods in the philosophy of mind just as Newton had done in



natural philosophy,<sup>1</sup> comes to sight in two places in Reid's writings from this period.<sup>2</sup> These are, first, his lectures on the "Elements of Natural History" and, second, his first two philosophical orations.<sup>3</sup> I will focus on the evidence from the lectures here and reserve consideration of the relevant material in the orations for a later stage in the argument.

It will be recalled that Reid's curriculum reform committee advised the study of "all the Branches of Natural History"<sup>4</sup> in the second year of the arts course, or first year of philosophy, presumably on the basis of its centrality to the whole of philosophy, whether natural philosophy, the philosophy of mind, logic, rhetoric, the laws of nature and nations, politics, economics, the fine arts or natural religion. In his Aberdeen lectures, Reid underlined the pivotal role of natural history:

[The] Physician will find all his *Materia Medica* described in Natural History the Limner most of his Colours, his Dyes, the Merchant a great part of his Commodities; the Farmer his Soils & Manures. And in a Word every Artist the Materials he Works upon. He will not onely find the Materials of his Art Described, but so Classed with other bodies that are allied to them in their Nature & Properties as may give him a More enlarged & Comprehensive View of his Art & very probably lead to Improvements in it

All Genuine Natural philosophy must be built on Natural History as its foundation. It is Natural History that collects & Exhibits the Phenomena which it is the Bussiness of Natural Philosophy to digest Compare & reduce to General Rules and Principles.<sup>5</sup>

The relevance of natural history to the philosophy of the human mind and the *sciences* that depend upon it was explained in Reid's *Inquiry*, which was first published in 1764 and forms a natural coda to the Aberdeen period. While it is a book and not a set of lecture notes, the *Inquiry* has the virtue of having originated in prelections and may therefore still be useful in unravelling the mystery of what Reid actually taught in the classroom at King's.<sup>6</sup> "The painter, the poet, the actor, the orator, the moralist, and the statesman," he wrote in the *Inquiry*, "attempt to operate upon the mind in different ways, and for different ends; and they succeed according as they touch properly the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Stewart, "Account," s. 2 *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> The Baconian influence is very prominent in the published and unpublished Gerard as well (see Robert Morgan's Notes from Gerard's Lectures on Pneumatics, Ethics and Logic, 1758–1759, EUL MSS. Dc.5.116, pp. 1, 8; Dc.5.117, pp. 174, 584, 591; *Plan*, pp. 11, 18, 22, 26, 34).

<sup>3</sup> 9 Apr 1753 and 28 Apr 1756.

<sup>4</sup> *Abstract*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> MS. 6/IV/1, fos 1r–2r.

<sup>6</sup> See Dedication to *Inquiry*, in *Works*, p. 96b.

strings of the human frame.”<sup>7</sup> So far he established the dependency of the fine arts, ethics and politics on the philosophy of mind. So far too can Reid’s praise of Montesquieu for “[setting] forth most lucidly the causes, principles, and effects of laws, morals and politics, from the first beginnings of human nature” be understood.<sup>8</sup> He then drew the connection between all of this and natural history:

Could we obtain a distinct and full history of all that hath past in the mind of a child, from the beginning of life and sensation, till it grows up to the use of reason — how its infant faculties began to work, and how they brought forth and ripened all the various notions, opinions, and sentiments which we find in ourselves when we come to be capable of reflection — this would be a treasure of natural history, which would probably give more light into the human faculties, than all the systems of philosophers about them since the beginning of the world.

Reid was sceptical about the possibility of achieving such a goal: “Reflection,” he said, “the only instrument by which we can discern the powers of the mind, comes too late to observe the progress of nature, in raising them from their infancy to perfection.”<sup>9</sup> This sense of the limitations of our understanding was his common border with Hume. But, while Hume’s scepticism with regard to reason and the senses threw him back upon opinion as the primary object of scientific observation, Reid was not vexed that science should remain within the narrow compass of our reason, secure in his conviction that God had given us faculties commensurate with our station and rank within Creation. Via the notion of common sense, Reid strove to re-empower reason. For Hume, the apprehension of reason’s inadequacy was a melancholic affliction that could be relieved only by the irresistible ministrations of the passions, which recalled the solitary philosopher to the pleasures of society and reconciled him to reckoning on probabilities where certainty had been removed.

Each philosopher must have regarded the other as playing on prejudice, Hume on our susceptibility to accepting authority on the basis of antiquity or slight analogy, Reid on our basic suggestibility where God and final causes are concerned. In order to ensure that deference was paid to the correct source of authority, Hume sought to attach people to their interests. Reid, for his part, had to inculcate in them a rational form of Christianity in order to avoid the extremes of enthusiasm and superstition. Zealotry was of course problematical for Hume as well, for it often coincided with crazy

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<sup>7</sup>*Works*, p. [97]a.

<sup>8</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, p. 938.

<sup>9</sup>*Works*, p. 99a.

notions of property and society and was to that extent inconsistent with polite morals on the one hand and interest-driven politics on the other. Reid was also concerned to preserve our hopes of eternity, for where these are carelessly dashed our wills are sapped and we are therefore disqualified from the pursuit of virtue to which our active natures have been assigned. He must have taken cold comfort in Hume's Machiavellian appreciation of the doctrine of an afterlife in his essay "Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State": "Whether this Reasoning of [the Christians] be just or not is no Matter. Its Influence on their Life and Conduct must still be the same. And those, who attempt to disabuse them of such Prejudices, may, for aught I know, be good Reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good Citizens and Politicians; since they free Men from one Restraint upon their Passions, and make the Infringement of the Laws of Equity and Society, in one Respect, more easy and secure."<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, both men, to repeat, seem to have agreed that the battlefield on which this conflict is decisively played out is that of common life, which is governed by probability.

I have already adverted to the Baconian emphasis on natural history and induction present in Reid's lectures.<sup>11</sup> It now remains to consider Reid's retailing of the Baconian inheritance in his own "general laws of practising philosophy",<sup>12</sup> of which he reckoned there were five and which he set forth in Orations 1 and 2. Philosophers had been plying their trade and sharpening their tools for a good long time and Reid seems to have thought it was high time that their work was formally reduced to method and their activities properly regulated: "In every art and, to be sure in every activity destined by design and reason for a certain end, it is necessary that there be laws both of the art and of the activity; these laws are sought from the nature and purpose of the art or activity itself and beyond or short of them right, truth, and usefulness cannot exist in that art or activity." Mathematics had from antiquity been prosecuted "according to law" and Reid hoped that philosophy could henceforth be carried on self-consciously, as it were, by its own rules.

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<sup>10</sup>*Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, 2nd ed. (London, 1750), p. 231. It is known that Reid read this essay in this period and regarded it as subversive of natural religion. (See Fred S. Michael and Emily Michael, "Reid's Hume: Remarks on Hume in Some Early Logic Lectures of Reid," *The Monist*, vol. 70, no. 4 (Oct 1987), p. 514).

<sup>11</sup>The same emphasis is present in the orations (see p. 938).

<sup>12</sup>Reid seems also to have contemplated the enumeration of certain "particular laws", i.e. those "appropriate to each section of philosophy", which would obviously include politics, but he did not, unfortunately, give details of any political laws in the orations. Still, one might infer these on the basis of a chance reference in Oration 2 and other Reid material that has survived and I shall do so after reviewing the general laws.

Reid's first law of the practice of philosophy, i.e. that "all inutile questions and disputes must be removed from philosophy on the grounds that they are unworthy of the name of this art", was derived from the clearly Baconian suggestion that the whole purpose of philosophy is "to improve the human lot and to increase the mastery of man over matter". Bacon also provided the inspiration for the second law, i.e. that "The philosopher will think that no knowledge, wisdom, or art that is useful to the human race is alien to himself", although it is a maxim of Cicero that lies behind this: philosophy is "not only ... the mother and parent ... of all praiseworthy arts, but also the nurse and nourisher of them." Bacon is, again, the source for Reid's third law, which forbids the philosopher from "[inventing] tales from his own mind about the nature of things, however probable and consistent these may be, since philosophy is not an offspring of the human mind, but a just and lawful interpretation of the works of nature itself or of God." Reid singled out Newton as the only one of "the saner philosophers" who "has obeyed" this law.

Cicero was also the inspiration of the fourth and fifth laws. According to the fourth law, the philosopher should not "busy himself in overthrowing common notions" while, by the fifth, philosophy should be "erected and built upon" common notions. In addition to these injunctions against idle reasoning was the imperative to discover first principles. "[I]f the first principles are given," Cicero once said with respect to geometry, "all the others must follow." In the modern age Newton had determined the first principles of physics. By analogy Reid's enterprise was to infer the existence of "axioms and phenomena in ethics and politics ... on which all right reasoning in these sciences depends." These remarks date from the end of the 1755–1756 session, but Reid appears to have deployed this strategy in the 1751–1752 academic year, as the passage from Montesquieu about the first beginnings of human nature, quoted earlier, shows. In Oration 1 in 1753 Reid also evokes the classical linkage of rhetoric, arms and politics: "Rhetoricians have propounded laws of rhetoric, have been the authors of laws of the art of generalship and of political administration."<sup>13</sup>

These Baconian and Ciceronian methodological <sup>g</sup>maneuverings furthered the critique of Humean scepticism that Reid had begun while he was a minister reading Epictetus and Xenophon. As he put it in Oration 3 in 1759: "Formerly I suspected, but now I know for certain, that the philosophy of the human intellect, even though it has been subjected to study by excellent minds in this generation and in the previous century,

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<sup>13</sup>*Philosophical Orations*, p. 933.



has yet right up to the present time been enveloped in darkness and based on hypotheses and fancies of the human mind rather than on an accurate analysis of the intellect.” It is Hume whom Reid had principally in mind here, and ~~that~~ the works to which he refers are the *Treatise* and the *Philosophical Essays*. He likened the theory of ideas to “a will-o’-the-wisp” that “[leads us] astray into the sterile and disagreeable wilderness of scepticism.” Hume’s scepticism offended against “the common sense of men”. Reid maintained this critique through Oration 4 in 1762 as well.<sup>14</sup> Only when Hume’s sceptical hypotheses were replaced by true first principles could ethics and politics be put on a firm footing.

Once again Reid is back in the realm of opinion, the familiar retreat of the Ciceronian sceptic. Thus in his logic lectures from this period Reid took up again the discussion of probability that he had encountered in Butler’s *Analogy* (1736) in the 1730s, although the work he recommended to his students at King’s had preceded Butler, i.e. Humphry Ditton’s *Discourse Concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1712). “Affection, Inclination, Temper, Endowments, Interest, external Circumstances, and Condition in the World are general Motives which fail not to influence Mankind to act, in their several Places, after this or that Manner, upon proper Occasions, as they have Power and Opportunity.”<sup>15</sup> This kind of reasoning, which I underlined in my account of Reid’s study of Butler, is very much in evidence in what appear to be Reid’s own lecture notes on logic from this period, a distinctive portion of which begins: “Various kinds of Evidence; the Observing & distinguishing of these is one of the Most important parts of that Logic which is really usefull in Life.”<sup>16</sup>

The Butlerian influence is, moreover, strongly indicated in the one set of student notes that has survived, and which probably dates from the last session in which Reid delivered lectures on logic at King’s.<sup>17</sup> In these notes he is reported to have said:

It has been disputed whether demonstrative Evidence can be applied to any oy<sup>r</sup> subject than Mathematics. For my part I don’t think it can, for tho’ y<sup>re</sup> is hardly any common man, who is not firmly persuaded of y<sup>e</sup> truth of many things as if he had Demonstration for it; yet we shall

<sup>14</sup>Pp. 932–934, 941, 945–946, 948–949, 954–957; cf. pp. 951, 953, 975; see also pp. 958, 960, 986.

<sup>15</sup>3rd ed. (London, 1722), p. 103; cf. p. 107.

<sup>16</sup>MS. 6/III/3, fo. 2r.

<sup>17</sup>The notes are dated 1763, but this is clearly impossible. According to the new curriculum, Reid would have given lectures on logic three times, first in 1755–1756, then in 1758–1759 and finally in 1761–1762.



find, y<sup>t</sup> his Belief is build upon a foundation far diff<sup>l</sup>. from y<sup>e</sup> Reasoning in Mathematics.<sup>18</sup>

“[A] first principle we daily act upon,” Reid is reported to have said, is “[t]he necessity of a cause to any new production”,

which philosophers reason upon, and which had never been called in question by any except Mr. Hume who, among other odd notions, gives it against this also. ... We not only from the constitution of our nature, reason that a cause is necessary to produce a new effect, but we also reason from the nature of the effect to that of the cause. ... Without this evidence, we could pursue no design, nor could we pretend to distinguish any character, for it is by the effect of a benevolent disposition that we reckon a man benevolent: the disposition in his mind which is the cause of these effects cannot be known to us. If a King finds his neighboring Prince raising a powerful army, he immediately concludes that he is going to carry on war somewhere and therefore he puts himself in readiness, and must be on his guard, and this is reasoning from the nature of the effect to that of the cause.<sup>19</sup>

A related passage in Reid’s own hand which undoubtedly formed part of his lecture notes on logic is useful not only for the gloss it provides on the above discussion, but also for the insight it affords into his conception of politics in this period. Against Hume’s scepticism with regard to the evidence of testimony Reid maintained that it is possible to make inferences from effects to causes on evidence that we have only on report, even where we have no previous experience in the subjects in which we reason.<sup>20</sup> “[W]e who never governed Kingdoms nor fought battles never had any Experience to shew that great Actions must proceed from a great Mind or that the Preservation and Provision and Discipline of an Army depends upon the Wisdom of the General. That their Success in Battle depends upon his Skill and Conduct”, and yet we never doubt the legitimacy of our reasonings in these matters.<sup>21</sup> And, Reid implied, nor should we, for the basis of such probabilities is not so much historical testimony or our experience of the veracity of such evidence as the determination of

<sup>18</sup>John Campbell’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures on Logic, EUL MS. Dk.3.2, pp. 82–83; see also p. 84.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Michael and Michael, “Reid’s Hume,” pp. 521–522.

<sup>20</sup>In the essay on miracles appended to his *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, 2nd ed. (London, 1750), pp. 173–207; see also Campbell’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, EUL MS. Dk.3.2, p. 58, where Reid is reported to have mentioned “two Essays subjoined to y<sup>e</sup> last Edition of [Hume’s] Philosophical works.” This work was renamed *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* when it was included in a new edition of Hume’s *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* published in London in 1758, and this is what we know it by today.

<sup>21</sup>MS. 6/III/3, fo. 1r; cf. the corresponding material in Campbell’s Notes quoted in Michael and Michael, “Reid’s Hume,” p. 524.

our make and frame, i.e. our *disposition* to believe that, for example, great actions must proceed from a great mind. Such is the nature of our rationality. That the inferences we make in such cases are not the effect of a Humean association of ideas is indicated by the fact that we believe, for example, in the existence of a great mind when we witness great actions and not only in the *connection* between the actions and the mind from which they proceed. What Reid is apparently saying is that we cannot believe in the connection without also believing in its antecedent. Our rationality is such that it extends our opinion beyond what Hume would allow to be justified on his sceptical principles. But, to repeat, Reid was not inclined to denigrate reason; he was reconciled to its limitations, as he did not feel that these held us back from true knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

To sum up: when faced with the rigorous scepticism of Hume on pneumatological, moral and political fronts, Reid's immediate strategy was to engage him on his own terms, i.e. on the battlefield of opinion. His next manoeuvre consisted in uncovering in the structure of the human mind a foundation for the different kinds of inductive, i.e. probable, reasoning. In the case of that probable knowledge which relates to natural signs and thus which leads us to first principles in politics, Reid was sceptical in the sense that he did not believe this knowledge could be reduced to rules. But even though he regarded it as prior to reasoning and experience, it was still apparently within the realm of rationality; therefore he did not resort to the Humean doctrine of necessity.

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<sup>22</sup>See *Works*, p. 199b; MS. 7/V/23, p. 3; *Philosophical Orations*, pp. 940–941.

### PART 3

#### REID AS PROFESSOR: THE GLASGOW YEARS

In 1764 Reid moved to Glasgow to take up his new responsibilities as professor of moral philosophy. The change of university brought with it a new set of pressures, for Reid would be lecturing to a classroom audience thoroughly versed in the doctrines of Reid's predecessor in the Glasgow chair, Adam Smith. As Smith's teaching owed much to the views of Hume, addressing Smith's former pupils required Reid to return to his critique of Hume.

At Glasgow Reid was expected to teach jurisprudence and politics. The options available to him were the modern natural law tradition of Grotius and Pufendorf and the Scottish alternatives to that tradition — namely Carmichael and Hutcheson, Hume and Smith. I shall examine these options in Section 1, examining the failed tradition of natural law in Chapter 7 and the Scottish alternatives in Chapter 8.

It is clear that Reid found these options unsatisfactory and therefore took it upon himself to develop his own science of politics and work towards the creation of a new political jurisprudence. Reid developed his science largely as a response to Hume and Smith. Thus in Section 2 I shall follow Reid through his first course of lectures at Glasgow in 1764–1765 as he philosophizes about power (Chapter 9), copes with custom and habit (Chapter 10), underwrites the enforcement of morals and the restriction of property (Chapter 11) and encourages the pursuit of virtue (Chapter 12).

In Section 3 I follow Reid through subsequent revisions of his lectures on politics and jurisprudence from the 1765–1766 to the 1779–1780 sessions in which he sharpens his criticism of Hume and Smith and launches a new political jurisprudence. Thus in Chapter 13 I will show how in 1765–1766 Reid tried to put the science of politics on the foundation of liberty rather than of necessity; in Chapter 14 how, largely in 1768–1769, Reid built his account of framing governments and reforming constitutions on the assumption of common sense; and in Chapter 15 how, in 1779–1780, Reid developed his criticism of Hume on the subject of contracts into a neo-Ciceronian doctrine of taking upon oneself a character resonant with the Lockean theme of trust deserved or betrayed in order to shore up the foundations of prudence and therefore of politics, which Reid conceived as a science of the highest prudence.

**Section 1**  
**Teaching Jurisprudence and Politics: The Available Options**

## Chapter 7

### The Tradition of Grotius and Pufendorf

Reid was elected to the moral philosophy chair at Glasgow on 22 May 1764. His appointment could only be described as controversial. Eighteen days were allowed for the choice of a successor to Adam Smith, during which time a good deal of politicking went on behind the scenes. But the business of promoting Reid had begun a few months earlier.<sup>1</sup> Reid's appointment was opposed by Joseph Black and John Millar but supported, both at Court and in the College, by James Ogilvy, Lord Deskford (later 6th Earl of Findlater and 3rd Earl of Seafield; ?1714–1770).<sup>2</sup> Deskford wrote to the professor of medicine and chemistry at Edinburgh, William Cullen (1710–1790),<sup>3</sup> as soon as he got wind of Smith's departure for France (and imminent demission) in January 1764, recommending Reid as "the fittest Man in the Kingdom for that Profession" and hoping to mobilize Cullen's Glasgow connections. Deskford suggested to Cullen: "If you are of the same Opinion, it will be doing a Service to the Publick to let your Friends who have Interest in the University of Glasgow know your Opinion."<sup>4</sup> Deskford may also have approached his brother-in-law Lord Hopetoun (2nd Earl; 1704–1781) on Reid's behalf. One wonders if it was with some calculation that Reid dedicated his *Inquiry*, published on 8 March,<sup>5</sup> to Deskford,<sup>6</sup> and one might also speculate, given that Reid's acceptance of the chair is dated *Edinburgh* 26 May,<sup>7</sup> that he had been actively trying to consolidate his Court support.<sup>8</sup> If this is in fact the

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<sup>1</sup>See *Glasgow Journal*, 17/24 May 1764; minute of University meeting for 22 May 1764, in Minutes of University Meetings, 1763–1768, GUA MS. 26643, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>An earlier Earl of Findlater "acknowledged as a friend and relation of his family" Reid's ancestor David Anderson of Finzaugh (R, "Some Farther Particulars of the Family of the Gregorys and Andersons, Communicated by Dr. Thomas Reid, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, a Nephew of the Late Dr. David Gregory Savilian Professor at Oxford," in Charles Hutton, *A Mathematical and Philosophical Dictionary*, vol. 1 (London, 1796), p. 556).

<sup>3</sup>Formerly professor of medicine at Glasgow.

<sup>4</sup>Deskford to Cullen, 22 Jan 1764, GUL MS. Cullen 78, fo. 2r. See also City of Edinburgh District Council Archives, Council Record, vol. 81, pp. 404–407; vol. 82, p. 150. See further [R] to Dr David Skene, 18 Apr [1766], NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 25r.

<sup>5</sup>*Glasgow Journal*, 1/8 Mar 1764.

<sup>6</sup>Reid admitted later in life that he was not above currying favour by means of such dedications (see Reid to Dr James Gregory, 30 Jul 1789, in *Works*, p. 73a–b).

<sup>7</sup>Reid to Sir Thomas Miller (Lord Advocate and Rector; 1717–1789), GUA MS. 34687, fo. 1r; cf. Miller to William Leechman, Edinburgh, 29 May 1764, GUA MS. 34559, fo. 1r.

<sup>8</sup>Although Deskford says to Cullen: "M<sup>r</sup> Reid is quite ignorant of my writing, and I suppose has no Thoughts of the Thing" (GUL MS. Cullen 78, fo. 2r).



case, it belies Dugald Stewart's portrayal of Reid as a man "remote from the pursuits of ambition,"<sup>9</sup> itself an echo of Reid's demurring representation of himself in the Dedication to his *Inquiry* as one "disengaged from the pursuits of interest and ambition".<sup>10</sup> Reid's appointment was also supported by an Aberdeen crony, Robert Traill (1720–1775), who was, like Reid, an original member of the Wise Club, and who had been appointed professor of divinity at Glasgow in 1761 with Deskford's help.<sup>11</sup> Lord Kames (1696–1782), with whom Reid had corresponded on philosophical subjects since at least 1762,<sup>12</sup> was another who supported the philosopher's appointment at Court. Kames' support for Reid is ironic given the fact that the latter, as we have seen, considered Kames to be, like Hume, a determinist or fatalist, and hence antipathetic to his own philosophy. Lord Queensberry (3rd Duke, and 2nd Duke of Dover; 1698–1778) may also have added his voice at Court to those of Deskford, Hopetoun and Kames. Gaining the Court interest was especially important when the College recommendation was divided, since the presentation of the chair lay with the Crown.

Dr William Wight (d. 1782),<sup>13</sup> who had been appointed professor of church history at Glasgow in 1762, and the professor of humanity George Muirhead (d. 1773) had also been considered within the College as successors to Smith. Hume's friend Baron Mure (1718–1776)<sup>14</sup> probably favoured Wight.<sup>15</sup> Black and Millar would have preferred Thomas Young, who had carried on Smith's classes in the latter's absence. The eligibility of a certain Mr Baillie<sup>16</sup> was being urged by the Lord Privy Seal, James Stuart Mackenzie (?1719–1800), who seemed anxious to carry on in the footsteps of

<sup>9</sup>"Life of Reid," in *Works*, p. [3]a.

<sup>10</sup>*Works*, p. 96b.

<sup>11</sup>Traill was distantly related to Deskford. Deskford had also been instrumental in getting another of his kinsmen, namely William Ogilvie (1736–1819), appointed successor as regent and professor of philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen in 1764 (see D.C. MacDonald, Biographical Notes to Ogilvie, *Birthright in Land* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1891), pp. 157, 159, 160).

<sup>12</sup>See, e.g., Reid to Kames, 29 Dec 1762, in Ian Ross, ed., "Unpublished Letters of Thomas Reid to Lord Kames, 1762–1782," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 7 (1965–1966) (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), in which Reid mentions his "Enquiry into the five Senses" (p. 24).

<sup>13</sup>Hugh Blair to [Hume], 6 Apr 1764, NLS MS. 23153 (Hume Correspondence), no. 52, fo. 1v.

<sup>14</sup>Himself elected Rector of Glasgow University in 1764 (see minute of University meeting for 20 Nov 1764, in Minutes of University Meetings, 1763–1768, GUA MS. 26643, p. 32 and R to Dr Andrew Skene, 14 Nov 1764, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 2r).

<sup>15</sup>See Hume to Mure, 27 Oct 1775, NLS MS. 21352 (Hume Correspondence), no. 15, fo. 1r–v.

<sup>16</sup>Undoubtedly Dr James Baillie (d. 1778), who would fail in this contest but be appointed professor of divinity after Traill's death in 1775.

his late uncle, the 3rd Duke of Argyll, in exerting influence in college appointments.<sup>17</sup> Black and Millar, however, feared that Mackenzie would be swayed by Kames' and Deskford's support of Reid; Black wrote to Smith praising Young's performance, and Millar urged Smith to prevail upon Mackenzie to block Reid's candidacy.<sup>18</sup> Smith was evidently not uninterested in the prospects for his successor; it seems that in the previous summer Henry Herbert (1741–1811)<sup>19</sup> was in Aberdeen sizing up Reid and the principal of Marischal College, George Campbell (1719–1796) on Smith's behalf as potential candidates (i.e. about the time when Smith was making arrangements to leave his post to become tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch).<sup>20</sup> Smith's interest in the matter was intellectual as well as pragmatic — after all, the immediate fate of his philosophical system lay in the balance. It is not clear whom Smith eventually supported, although he did assure Mackenzie that he had promised Young only a temporary post. Whether Mackenzie abandoned Baillie, his original choice, is not known; eventually, of course, Kames' and Deskford's candidate won the day. This account is made even more complicated by the surprising claim in a much later source that a sixth candidate, Samuel Charters of Luscar (1742–1825),<sup>21</sup> was offered but declined the chair.<sup>22</sup>

Reid himself reports on none of these machinations to Dr Andrew Skene, with whom he was corresponding at the time, but we may suppose it provides the background to his report that he has been received with “perfect civility” by the masters of the College, who “manage their political differences with outward decency and good manners although with a good deal of Intrigue and secret caballing”.<sup>23</sup>

Reid himself engaged in electioneering and patronage politics throughout the Glasgow period. Getting wind of Black's intention to quit Glasgow and take up a post at Edinburgh in 1766, he attempted to engineer Dr David Skene's appointment to the professorship of the theory and practice of medicine, and in 1796, the last year of his life, he lobbied hard to get “the Court Interest” on side to exclude a certain “ministerial

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<sup>17</sup>Indeed Mackenzie complains about the impropriety of his not being consulted early on in the selection process (see Mackenzie to Mure, 2 Feb 1764, 15 Feb 176[4], 6 Mar 1764, in *Caldwell Papers*, pt 2, vol. 1 (Glasgow: Maitland Club, 1854), pp. 232, 171–172, 241.

<sup>18</sup>See Black to Smith, 23 Jan 1764; Millar to Smith, 2 Feb 1764, in W.R. Scott, *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1937), pp. 256–257.

<sup>19</sup>Later Baron Porchester.

<sup>20</sup>See Herbert to Smith, 11 Sept 1763, GUL MS. Gen. 1035/147, fo. 1r.

<sup>21</sup>Later minister of Kincardine-in-Menteith.

<sup>22</sup>See Hew Scott, ed., *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1917), p. 143.

<sup>23</sup>R to AS, 14 Nov 1764, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 1v.

candidate" (presumably the one supported by Henry Dundas (later 1st Viscount Melville; 1742–1811) whose "influence was much dreaded") from the professorship of natural philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

Once the fierce politicking concerning his appointment was concluded, Reid's new responsibilities proved to be strenuous. His teaching day at Glasgow began at 7:30 a.m. with a public "prelection" on moral philosophy — which for him comprised three branches: pneumatology, ethics and politics — followed by an "hour of Examination" at eleven. During part of the term he gave a second, private, prelection at noon on "the culture of the human mind," which included eloquence and the fine arts. Moreover, during his tenure at Glasgow Reid held a range of administrative posts, including Vice-Rector (to Edmund Burke), Quaestor (i.e. Librarian) and Clerk of the Senate, and to Andrew Skene he complains of the onerous duty of attending four or five College meetings a week.<sup>25</sup> He was also expected to intervene in the inevitable conflicts between students and professors, being called in to assist in the aftermath of one riot and playing a role in restoring law and order in the wake of a couple of other disturbances, in one case taking the part of the excitable professor of natural philosophy, John Anderson, who assaulted a student who had disrupted his class.<sup>26</sup> Reid was also involved in policing the College garden, where he liked to stroll, and which was being vandalized by students.<sup>27</sup>

When Reid came to Glasgow, he knew that he would have to teach jurisprudence and politics. There had been a long tradition on the Continent connected with the names of

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<sup>24</sup>[R] to DS, 18 Apr [1766], NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 25r; R to James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, 14 Apr 1796, in Appendix to *Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London: HMSO, 1874), p. 519; see also E.L. Cloyd, *James Burnett, Lord Monboddo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 158.

<sup>25</sup>R to Dr Andrew Skene, 14 Nov 1764, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 1r.

<sup>26</sup>See minute of University meeting for 11 Jun 1768, in *Minutes of University Meetings, 1763–1768*, GUA MS. 26643, pp. 313–316; minutes of University meetings for 4 Apr 1769 and 4 May 1769 (including the 3 o'clock meeting for 4 May), in *Minutes of Rector's Meeting and University Meeting, 1768–1770*, GUA MS. 26644, pp. 53, 72, 74–75; minute of College meeting for 26 Apr 1773, in GUA MS. 26690, *Minutes of Meetings of Faculty, 1771–1776*, pp. 141–146; cf. R to Dr Andrew Skene, 8 May 1766, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 11v ("We have been remarkably free from riots and disorders among the Students, & I did not indeed expect that 350 young fellows could have been kept quiet for so many Months with so little trouble[.] They commonly attend so many Classes of different Professors from an hour after seven in the Morning till eight at Night that they hav[e] little time to do mischief"); minute of College meeting for 26 Jan 1770, in *Minutes of Meetings of Faculty, 1753–1755 1761–1770*, p. 152 ("from half an hour past seven o'clock in the morning till nine at night there are lectures given except from two till three o'clock [in the] afternoon").

<sup>27</sup>GUA MS. 43370, cited by A.D. Boney, *The Lost Gardens of Glasgow University* (London: Christopher Helm, 1988), p. 175.

Grotius and Pufendorf of trying to produce a jurisprudence and politics impervious to scepticism. Carmichael and Hutcheson in Glasgow carried on the project, followed by Hume and Smith. It is therefore worth examining the agendas both of the Continental natural lawyers and of their Scottish successors. Reid could not have been unaware of the tradition and its Scottish incarnations and would have had to scrutinize the different agendas in order to develop his own jurisprudence and politics. I shall begin with the so-called modern tradition of natural law and proceed in the next chapter to the Scottish alternatives. It is my thesis that Reid would take his place in the ongoing attempt to generate a jurisprudence and politics resilient against scepticism while incorporating key elements of the Continental strategy and making important concessions to Hume. Reid nevertheless developed a unique political jurisprudence largely calculated as a criticism of the jurisprudence and politics of Hume, which he regarded as near cousins of Hume's sceptical metaphysics.

# 1.

Like every other student of natural jurisprudence, Reid looked to the Dutch theorist Hugo Grotius as the founder of the discipline. In his masterpiece, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (1625), Grotius made a sharp distinction between natural jurisprudence and the "Art of Politicks". He declared:

I have forbore meddling with those Things that are of a quite different Subject, as the giving Rules about what it may be profitable or advantageous for us to do: For they properly belong to the Art of Politicks, which Aristotle rightly so handled by itself, that he mixed nothing foreign with it. Bodin on the contrary has confounded it with that which is the Subject of this Treatise. Yet in some Places I have made mention of the useful, but by the by, and to distinguish it more clearly from a Question of the just.<sup>28</sup>

For Grotius, politics was concerned with that which is *utile*, whereas jurisprudence related to that which is *honestum*; thus a Ciceronian distinction was invoked. By characterizing politics as an art, Grotius was already making a sceptical admission in line with the humanist classification of ethics and politics as practical subjects as opposed to theoretical and scientific ones.<sup>29</sup> Thus in Book 1, Chapter 3 of *The Rights*

<sup>28</sup>Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, ed. Jean Barbeyrac, trans. [Basil Kennet] (London, 1738), p. xxxv.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Richard Tuck, "The 'Modern' Theory of Natural Law," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 116–117, who takes a different view.



of *War and Peace*, Grotius reduced Aristotle's *political science* to the "Art of Government."<sup>30</sup> Politics could not be treated as a science in view of the diversity of beliefs and customs evident in the world: "[T]here are many ways of living, one being no better than another, and out of so many ways of living each is free to select that which he prefers". And just as individuals are free to choose their own manner of living, so too "a people can select the form of government which it wishes". Contrary to Aristotle's teaching in the *Politics*, Grotius considered that the "legal right" of the form of government a people might happen to settle upon is "not to be measured by the superior excellence of this or that form of government, in regard to which different men hold different views, but by its free choice."<sup>31</sup>

While Grotius introduced natural-law thinking into Protestant Europe, he was also, paradoxically, the first to loosen the stranglehold of Aristotelian dogma upon jurisprudential thinking, as the Swiss Protestant Jean Barbeyrac pointed out in his *Historical and Critical Account of the Science of Morality* (1729).<sup>32</sup> In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle called *natural justice* that which "bears the same Force in all places, and doth not depend on particular Sentiments", while in his *Rhetoric*, he asserted the existence of "a General Right and Wrong, or Just and Unjust, believ'd and profess'd by all Men; altho' no Society should be instituted amongst them, and no Covenants be transacted."<sup>33</sup> In doing so Grotius owed something to the challenge issued to Aristotle's faith in the universality of conventional Athenian morality by the French sceptical humanist Michel de Montaigne apropos of the discovery of indigenous peoples hitherto unknown to European society. As Montaigne wrote in his *Essais* (1580): "Philosophers can hardly be serious when they try to introduce certainty into Law by asserting that there are so-called Natural Laws, perpetual and immutable, whose essential characteristic consists in their being imprinted upon the human race. How unlucky they are — (for what else should I call it but bad luck, seeing that out of laws so infinite in number, [philosophers] cannot find even one

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<sup>30</sup>Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, p. 63.

<sup>31</sup>Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 104.

<sup>32</sup>[Jean] Barbeyrac, *An Historical and Critical Account of the Science of Morality*, trans. Carew (London, 1729), in [Samuel] Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, ed. [Jean] Barbeyrac, trans. [Basil] Kennett, 4th ed. (London, 1729), p. 79.

<sup>33</sup>[Samuel] Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. Basil Kennett and William Percivale (Oxford, 1703), p. 97.



which luck or accidental chance has allowed to be universally accepted by the agreement of all peoples).”<sup>34</sup>

Yet Montaigne did acknowledge a lowest common denominator — although not a moral one — in the prudential principle of self-preservation, which required an ascetic detachment from a morally divided, and therefore dangerous, world. Public-spiritedness and patriotism were to be avoided, for in a climate characterized by localism any expression of loyalty exposed one to danger. On a practical level, Montaigne’s moral relativism issued in a recommendation of quietism: having a set of beliefs with which to console oneself was ultimately more important than the truth or, more to the point, authority of those beliefs.<sup>35</sup>

As Richard Tuck has cogently shown, Grotius’s great work must be viewed as a reply both to sceptical humanists such as Montaigne and to Aristotelians. Grotius’ response to Aristotelianism was sharp and unequivocal: the Stagirite’s moral principles were hopelessly parochial; consequently, no scope could be given to an account of the classical virtues within the compass of a universal moral science.<sup>36</sup> His reply to Montaigne was hardly less emphatic but involved crucial concessions on the principle of self-preservation and the practical recommendation to endure present evils.

Grotius articulated his position in the course of answering the sceptical charges laid against natural law by the second-century B.C. sceptic Carneades in the latter’s “brief against justice”. According to Grotius’ account in the Prolegomena to his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, Carneades held that

Laws ... were instituted by Men for the sake of Interest; and hence it is that they are different, not only in different Countries, but according to the Times. As to that which is called Natural Right, it is a mere Chimera. Nature prompts all Men, and in general all Animals, to seek their own Advantage: So that either there is no Justice at all, or if there is any, it is extreme Folly, because it engages us to procure the Good of others, to our own Prejudice.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Michel de Montaigne, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, in *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, trans. and ed. M.A. Screech (London: Allen Lane, 1991), pp. 653–654.

<sup>35</sup>See Tuck, *Hobbes*, pp. 8, 51, 81, 91, 93, 115; and Richard Tuck, Introduction to Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. xiii.

<sup>36</sup>See Tuck, “‘Modern Theory’,” in *Languages*, pp. 111, 116–117.

<sup>37</sup>Hugo Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, trans. Kelsey, p. 10; Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, pp. xiv–xv.

Carneades' claim that human laws originated in expediency and have their roots in the customs of the place whence they are enacted and are variable among the same people at different times reduced natural jurisprudence to politics, making the former out to be a cover for bare interest and at the same time denying its entitlement to the character of a science for the same reason that politics had to be regarded as a mere art: that which is merely expedient relates to particular historical circumstances and cannot claim to be universal and eternal. It also told against the practice of searching for universal principles of jurisprudence in positive law. Carneades' insinuation that there is no law of nature because human beings no less than beasts are instinctively driven to pursue ends which are of advantage only to themselves raised the suspicion that reason could play no part in shaping our ideas of justice and made it possible to question whether justice had any necessity at all. This led inexorably to the suspicion that justice is a form of folly; one might describe it as a zero-sum game, i.e. a contest in which one person's gain is another's loss, but one which nevertheless encourages the players to believe that by deferring to the advantage of others they serve their own interests. Carneades' brief against justice was therefore a devastating attack on the Stoic doctrine that promoting the happiness of one's neighbour could only add to one's own share of happiness.

Here Grotius rebutted Carneades on his own ground. Notwithstanding the variety of human customs and laws, he averred, there are certain features of the human condition common to every being regardless of time and place. In order to demonstrate this, Grotius proposed to strip away the layers of conventionality so much insisted on by Carneades by means of a thought experiment in which the naked core of human motivation might be exposed. The result would be the discovery of a state of nature whose features constituted a sort of minimum content of natural law about which no reasonable person could disagree. Such a project might deftly avoid the need — made inadmissible by Carneades — to search for universal principles of jurisprudence in positive law, thus leaving the field open for debate about ends of a higher nature.<sup>38</sup>

The two features Grotius uncovered in this exercise were an ever-active (i.e. primary) instinctive *desire* for self-preservation and a reluctance to injure those who merely seek to preserve themselves. These features derived from our "impelling desire for society," a secondary principle of our nature, which is quickened by *rational* reflection on the necessities of our condition. Here Grotius took the opportunity to affirm that in

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<sup>38</sup>See James Tully, Introduction to Samuel Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xviii–xix.

addition to being naturally concerned with our own self-preservation and having an equally natural love of society, we were also equipped with a rational “faculty of knowing and acting in accordance with general principles.” He held that these rational powers restrained the passions and defined the true nature of man, which he equated with the law of nature.<sup>39</sup> Far from reducing us to the level of brutes animated by blind impulse alone, as Carneades had done, Grotius offered a self-sustaining *ethic* of self-preservation which could account for the moral foundations of a simple society. Indeed, Grotius suggested that such principles and such a society actually existed in the comity of nations.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to emphasize that this ethic was built on a rather limited teleology, one which held no hope of *perfectibility*. Grotius never claimed that self-preservation and natural sociability would be harmonious principles in all cases. He did insist, however, that in the event of a conflict we were duty-bound to bear up patiently, sacrificing self-interest to sociability as much as possible. Grotius everywhere emphasized the dangerous uncertainty and confusion that inevitably accompanied the breakdown of law and order. Where our natural sociability was not engaged by the application of right reason, we tended to degenerate into a “non-social horde,” falling prey to those phantoms generated by the self-preservation instinct, “avarice, ... lust, ... anger ... ill-advised compassion ... [and] ... an overmastering desire to achieve eminence.”<sup>41</sup> For Grotius, reason and society were not so much the means of achieving the *summum bonum* as they were the instruments by which we might ensure a more peaceful form of survival.

The obligation to preserve ourselves by all — or almost all — means and the corresponding duty to abstain from harming others gratuitously was therefore imposed on us by our rational and social nature. This obligation was supported by the rewards and punishments of conscience. It had the incontrovertibility of a mathematical law and would bind us even if God did not exist or had not commanded it or backed it up with eternal sanctions. Grotius’ God was himself bound by the moral algebra of the universe, or, rather, he was “nature itself.” Unlike Carneades, who held that justice originated in expediency and that its obligation therefore derived from mere *prudence*, Grotius believed that justice was a function of our moral nature, although its obligation was *reinforced* by expediency, i.e. by the necessity of social co-operation under

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<sup>39</sup>Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, pp. 11, 12; see also pp. 13, 51, 53, 468.

<sup>40</sup>See Tuck, *Hobbes*, p. 21.

<sup>41</sup>Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, pp. 25, 111, 139; see also pp. 17, 53.

conditions of relative scarcity. Unlike Carneades, who doubted that reason could play any part in shaping our ideas of justice, Grotius believed that the rules of justice were self-evident to all human beings, whether by virtue of our perception of their agreement with our common rational and social make-up or as a result of the influence of a universal *feeling*, which he called the “common sense of mankind.”

So anxious was Grotius to combat Carneades’ reduction of natural jurisprudence to expediency that he asserted that even if we were entirely self-sufficient as individuals or states we would still be led by our very nature into the “mutual relations of society”. Against Carneades’ suggestion that if justice exists at all it is a form of folly Grotius declared it would be a sign not of folly but of *wisdom* to “allow ourselves to be drawn towards that to which we feel our nature leads.” For even if this required us to sacrifice the occasional short-term advantage, individuals or states would invariably gain in the long run by retaining their good name and therewith the benefits of alliance, whether in the state or in the society of states.

Grotius was also at pains to oppose the much more worrisome notion — also implicit in Carneades’ reduction of natural jurisprudence to expediency — that to a “king or imperial city nothing is unjust which is expedient.” He referred to Book 1, Chapter 45 of Cicero’s *De Officiis*, where the Roman orator maintained that “there are some Things so shameful and criminal, that a wise Man will not do them even for the Preservation of his Country”; Cicero afterwards observed “that by good luck it can never happen that the Interest of the State should require such Things to be done”. Had Grotius accepted this unreservedly he would have been committed to the view that, in principle, justice takes precedence over expediency and that, as a matter of fact, the demands of expediency never collide with the true interests of the state. In the event, however, a deep ambivalence about these claims emerged in his remarks on a passage from Book 3 of the *De Republica*, where he complained that “Cicero ... spoke too sweepingly when he said ... that where an unjust man is king, or where the aristocracy or the people itself is unjust, there is not a wicked state, but none at all.” A more correct formulation, in his view, was that of St Augustine, who in Book 19, Chapter 24 of his *City of God* suggested that even where there is injustice (presumably stemming from expediency) the state may be said to exist provided that there is still “some sort of union in a reasoning populace, associated through harmonious participation in the things which it chooses.” According to this view, occasional or perhaps even widespread acts of injustice do not cancel out the justice

embodied in the institutions of the State.<sup>42</sup> It is clear, then, that for Grotius the requirements of the law of nature could be fulfilled even in a state which pursued a policy that had more to do with expediency than with justice.

Grotius' juristic bias and his separation of politics and jurisprudence was never more evident than in his reflections on resistance. Picking up his Cicero again, Grotius regarded it as "A difficult Question in Politicks, whether when our Country is oppress'd with Tyranny, we may endeavour to rescue it, tho' with the extreme Hazard of the State." His inclination was to decide the question in the negative, warning that individuals should not presume to take in hand matters involving the interest of the whole populace and rejecting the opinion that sovereignty resided in the people, even where power had been vested in a monarch on the condition that the people retained the right to "restrain and punish" their rulers who abused their power. As always, Grotius stressed the dangerous consequences of resistance. This recalled Cicero's view that "peace on any terms between citizens seems more advantageous than civil war."

But he also emphasized that the task of jurisprudence was not to criticize regimes on the basis of whom they serve. Some governments are designed to benefit only the prince but are not on that account to be regarded as *tyrannical*, "since ... tyranny ... connotes injustice." The notion of justice, in other words, could not arbitrate against legally constituted authority. Just as there are "some men [who] are by nature slaves, that is, ... suited to slavery, so [too] there are some peoples so constituted that they understand better how to be ruled than to rule." Moreover, Grotius could imagine "not a few causes which may impel a people wholly to renounce the right to govern itself and to vest this in another, as, for example, if a people threatened with destruction cannot induce any one to defend it on any other condition; again, if a people pinched by want can in no other way obtain the supplies needed to sustain life." Not surprisingly did he gain notoriety as an apologist for slavery and absolutism. Yet he steadfastly refused to mix political with jurisprudential reasoning. As Richard Tuck observed, Grotius "never became an absolutist of the Bodinian type, but was always prepared to accept a high degree of variety in constitutional norms."

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<sup>42</sup>Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, p. xxii, sec. 24, n. 3; Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, pp. 9, 15, 16, 42, 178, 631–632; see also pp. 13, 17, 23, 43, 199–200 ("God did not bestow all products upon all parts of the earth, but distributed His gifts over different regions, to the end that men might cultivate a social relationship because one would have need of the help of another"), 468, 557, 860.



Grotius' natural jurisprudence therefore issued in a practical recommendation broadly similar to that advanced by the sceptical humanists: endure rather than resist the injustice of rulers and pray for better ones rather than risk destroying rational society. For Grotius as for the Stoics, endurance was the very fulfilment of our nature. Rebellion could be justified on Grotian principles only in cases where the prince sought to destroy rather than govern a people; resistance was legitimate only when non-resistance would put a people in "extreme and imminent peril." Even then, Grotius supposed that if those men who "associate[d] themselves together in the first place to form a civil society" were to be

asked whether they purposed to impose upon all persons the obligation to prefer death rather than under any circumstances to take up arms in order to ward off the violence of those having superior authority, I do not know whether they would answer in the affirmative, unless, perhaps, with this qualification, in case resistance could not be made without a very great disturbance in the state, and without the destruction of a great many innocent people.

In all but the most extraordinary circumstances, then, the people were required to suffer the injustices of their rulers, although they might passively resist if they were ordered to break the law of nature or the commandments of God.

It is also significant that Grotius invoked the same principle of preserving society as much as possible to defend common property *in extremis*, a doctrine that would be revived by Locke and Reid in their radical attitudes to property, as will be discussed in Chapter 11.<sup>43</sup>

Our understanding of Grotius' relation to Hobbes has been transformed by Richard Tuck, who has shown that the sceptical ethico-political teaching contained in Hobbes's *De Cive* (1642), *Elements of Law* (1650) and *Leviathan* (1651) was conceived as a direct attack on the natural jurisprudence tradition launched by Grotius. Hobbes's "philosophy of ethics", Tuck wrote, "was intended to underwrite the traditional sceptic's moral relativism." It will be recalled that Montaigne underlined the diversity of human beliefs and customs, despaired of discovering a common *moral* denominator and consequently held up self-preservation as a *prudential* beacon. Grotius raised that practical recommendation to the status of a natural right "upon which all known

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<sup>43</sup>Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, p. 124; Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, pp. 103, 104, 105, 109, 148, 149, 161, 162; Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 64; see also pp. 80, 171; Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, pp. 110, 138, 158, 199, 208, 225, 797 ("a civil government, which, even when regal, is not despotic"), 857.

moralties and codes of behaviour must have been constructed.” He also emphasized that we have a corresponding natural duty “to abstain from harming other people except where our own preservation is at stake”; this duty was a basic *law* consistent with our fundamental moral *right*.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, in making these claims Grotius relied on the assumption that morality was implicit in our rational and social nature and antedated the imposition of law, whether human or divine. Through right reason, which all people share, could be discovered the moral obligations that balance instinctive rights. Natural jurisprudence was the science built upon this ethical foundation.

The art of politics was erected upon a different foundation, that of prudence or expediency. Political constitutions were the product of human choices made against the background of necessity and became part of the natural fabric with which natural jurisprudence dealt. As such they were not subject to extrinsic forms of criticism. They were all equally legal: injustice consisted in breaking the letter of the law, not in sinning against a higher code.<sup>45</sup> Questions of resistance were prudential matters that had to be resolved with a view to the common good embodied in the juristic arrangements of a given regime.<sup>46</sup>

No part of Grotius's jurisprudence and politics was exempt from Hobbes's sceptical attack. Our moral evaluations, Hobbes thought, were entirely subjective, being nothing more than illusions generated by the passions. What was good was always good in relation to someone. Such goods either had a survival value or were such as answered to our insatiable desires. They were functions of our customs and opinions and could be influenced by religious or other ideological considerations. They could also vary within the same individual over time, in response to changing circumstances. There was no question of reason controlling our passions. Right reason did not exist:

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<sup>44</sup>Tuck, *Hobbes*, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup>See Grotius, *Law of War and Peace*, pp. 39, 189, 278.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, p. xxxv, sec. 58, n. 1: “Good Policy ought not to authorize nothing against the invariable Rules of Justice; and that of the Machiavellians, which makes the Advantage of the State, or of those who rule it, the only Principle, is false and abominable. However, the Just and the Useful are really two different Things, even in Politicks; as will be easily comprehended by one single Example taken from the Matter of the Work before us. Before engaging in War, it is above all Things necessary, that a just Cause should appear for so doing. But how goodsoever the Reasons for such a Step may be, if Circumstances so not allow of taking Arms, without acting to the Prejudice of the Publick Good, if there is Danger of losing as much as, or even more than will be gained, it would then be contrary to good Policy” (Barbeyrac's note).

what people called “right reason” was merely their own private reason.<sup>47</sup> It is clear that in such a state of affairs only the untrammelled right of self-preservation was operative; there were no common moral foundations; men did not “by nature seek society for its own sake”.<sup>48</sup> The state of nature, as Hobbes pointed out, was actually a state of war, a clash of boundless wills, the outcome of which was misery and carnage. It was a condition in which the individual was constantly afraid of violent death, because getting one’s way in the state of nature often meant killing others with whom one competed for the same good. And, as Hobbes put it in Chapter 13 of the *Leviathan*,

The notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. Force, and Fraud, are in warre the two Cardinall vertues. Justice, and Injustice are none of the Faculties neither of the Body nor Mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his Senses, and Passions. They are Qualities, that relate to men in Society, not in Solitude.<sup>49</sup>

If the rudiments of law could not be deduced from nature and if mankind had neither the resources of right reason nor a natural sociability with which to apprehend and feel its moral obligation, morality had to be legislated and obligation induced through threats and bribes aimed at the self-interested passions. In other words, natural law had to be created and sustained by mere prudence. And while the law of nature embodied the highest prudence, it did not in principle stand above prudence. Thus Hobbes reduced natural law to a prudential calculation.

Prudence came to sight with the advent of civil society. It was therefore coeval with politics. Our irreconcilable differences of opinion could be settled by authorizing and empowering a superior to legislate and enforce a moral consensus. This decision would be taken on the basis of calculations of self-interest made against a background of continual fear. Hobbes characterized such pragmatic expedients as the substance of natural law.<sup>50</sup> The object of this law was not to suppress the passions as such but to create an environment in which individuals could maximize gratification whilst minimizing fear: the whole dynamic of this exercise was geared to the passions. The

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<sup>47</sup>See Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of Law*, I.7.3, II.10.8, quoted in Tuck, *Hobbes*, pp. 52–53, 57–58; see also Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, III.31, quoted in Tuck, *Hobbes*, p. 56.

<sup>48</sup>Thomas Hobbes, *Of the Citizen*, p. 42, quoted in Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxviii.

<sup>49</sup>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 90; see also p. 104.

<sup>50</sup>See Tuck, *Hobbes*, pp. 56, 62.

laws of our superior or Leviathan would equip us all with the same sense of right and wrong. Justice would henceforth be defined as that which accorded with positive law. The Leviathan would be in charge of any further manipulation of opinion and therefore of any consequent alteration of our perceptions of right and justice.<sup>51</sup>

Accordingly, as Tuck has pointed out, Hobbesian ethico-political practice “issued in the conclusion that one must obediently follow the laws and customs of one’s country;” moreover, “one should internalize the laws and customs, and really believe them, or at least accept them as intellectually authoritative.”<sup>52</sup> All jurisprudential criticism had to be extinguished to ensure the effectiveness of the State. No *private* standard must be used to evaluate the laws. As Hobbes put it in Chapter 30 of his *Leviathan*,

no Law can be Unjust. The Law is made by the Sovereign Power, and all that is done by such Power, is warranted, and owned by every one of the people; and that which every man will have so, no man can say is unjust. It is in the Lawes of a Common-wealth, as in the Lawes of Gaming: whatsoever the Gamesters all agree on, is Injustice to none of them.

The duty of the sovereign was not to make just laws in some private sense of the word; it was rather to make good laws where *good* is defined in terms of “that which is Needfull, for the Good of the People, and withall Perspicuous.” Thus the reduction of justice to expediency was complete: Hobbes’s “Science of Naturall Justice, ... the onely Science necessary for Sovereigns, and their principall Ministers” was exactly equivalent to his “Politically Prudence”, for the essential task of Hobbes’s political prudence was to engender an effective standard of justice based on the recognition that natural justice is a logical consequence of the self-interested passions, which alone can bear the title of natural right.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to realize that Hobbes, like Grotius, may have regarded himself as *replying* to Carneadean scepticism. Carneades, it will be recalled, had asserted that either justice does not exist or, if it does, it is a form of folly because it requires us to compromise our own interests. This is a position which Hobbes had attacked in the *Leviathan*, as the following passage from Chapter 15 shows:

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<sup>51</sup>See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 124, 233.

<sup>52</sup>Tuck, *Hobbes*, p. 91.

<sup>53</sup>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 230, 239, 254; see also p. 223; James Moore, “Locke and the Scottish Jurists” (Conference for the Study of Political Thought, March, 1980, mimeographed), pp. 21–22.

The Foole hath sayd in his heart, there is no such thing as Justice; and sometimes also with his tongue; seriously alleaging, that every mans conservation, and contentment, being committed to his own care, there could be no reason, why every man might not do what he thought conduced thereunto: and therefore also to make, or not make; keep, or not keep Covenants, was not against Reason, when it conduced to ones benefit.<sup>54</sup>

Hobbes's reply to Carneades differed from Grotius', of course, because of the very different valuations these two thinkers applied to reason: Grotius appealed to the inward principle of right reason, while Hobbes sceptically reduced reason to self-interest. Hobbes may therefore be regarded as having formally rebutted Carneades without departing substantially from the traditional concerns of the sceptic.

## 2.

Samuel Pufendorf responded to Hobbes in his massive *De Iure Naturae et Gentium* (1672) and his shorter work *De Officio Hominis et Civis* (1673). His response, however, betrays just how deeply he drank of the sceptical spirits distilled by Hobbes. As Tuck and James Tully have demonstrated, Pufendorf began as Hobbes had done by denying that moral qualities were inherent in nature and asserting that morality had to be imposed on the world *legislatively*. Like Hobbes, too, Pufendorf denied that we have any instinctive predispositions toward the moral and political codes embodied in the different forms of society. Pufendorf's work, like that of Hobbes, was thus built upon a fundamental criticism of the basic theory advanced by Grotius.

Like Grotius, Pufendorf and Hobbes made use of the fiction of a state of nature as a starting-point in their attempt to generate a science of natural jurisprudence and confirmed the Stoic belief that self-preservation is our first concern. But Pufendorf's account of our natural condition was much more closely textured than Grotius's or Hobbes's. Like his formidable predecessors, Pufendorf acknowledged our basic inability to preserve ourselves in isolation from some form of society and therefore the necessity to join with others in a social life. But whereas Grotius emphasized that this necessity originated in the unequal distribution of resources and could be overcome by our natural sociability, and Hobbes stressed that it arose from the compulsion introduced by fatal competition but could be tempered by the rituals of society,

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<sup>54</sup>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 101; see also Tuck, "'Modern' Theory," in *Languages of Political Theory*, p. 114.



Pufendorf sought to refract Grotius' vision through a Hobbesian lens.<sup>55</sup> As Istvan Hont has pointed out, "to put natural jurisprudence on a secure foundation, it was not enough just to re-emphasise sociability as an observed fact of human existence. Rather, this fact had to be re-expressed within the framework of a Hobbesian analysis of the 'state of nature'."<sup>56</sup>

Far from possessing the rational and social *faculties* of Grotius's natural man, Pufendorf's man was a "'mute and ignoble Animal, Master of no Powers or Capacities', displaying nothing else but 'exceeding Weakness', a 'wonderful Impotency' and 'natural Indigence'." To complete his Hobbesian portrait of human nature, Pufendorf added that our desires were highly sophisticated, frequently insatiable and endlessly variable. Opinion transformed our simple needs into extravagant desires. "'There is', he said, 'no more Diversity of living, than there are Opinions and ways of living; each of which is cry'd up, with wonderful Perverseness, by the several Patrons of them.'"<sup>57</sup> It is the *opinion* engendered by the imposition of law, moreover, that gives one a conscience. As Tully has shown, in Pufendorf not only are moral distinctions created by law but "Even one's basic sense of right and wrong is said to be acquired by being under the obligation of a law". The "mild stings of conscience" (Tully's phrase) were apparently inadequate as a guide for action. And our "love of humanity", which Pufendorf characterized as a "natural sympathy for others" was no match for self-love.<sup>58</sup> Opinion was therefore the wild card of human nature. On the basis of opinion, as Hont has underlined, man was on the one hand "subject to 'prodigious Corruption and Degeneracy'; on the other hand, however, he was *perfectible*, 'more capable of fruitful Culture and of useful Improvement' than any other creature."<sup>59</sup> The forces that could manipulate opinion were therefore crucial for Pufendorf.

Lest it be thought that his natural man lacked a capacity for knowledge or the faculty of reason, it would be well to underline that Pufendorf understood the law of nature to be the "Dictate of right Reason"; by this he meant that the "Understanding of Man is

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<sup>55</sup>See Tuck, "'Modern' Theory," in *Languages of Political Theory*, pp. 102, 105, 115; Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xvii–xix.

<sup>56</sup>Istvan Hont, "The Language of Sociability and Commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the Theoretical Foundations of the 'Four-Stages Theory'," in *Languages of Political Theory*, p. 262.

<sup>57</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. B. Kennet, 4th ed. (London, 1729), 2.1.6, quoted in Hont, "Language of Sociability and Commerce," in *Languages of Political Theory*, p. 263.

<sup>58</sup>Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxv; see also pp. xxviii, xxix.

<sup>59</sup>Pufendorf, quoted in Hont, "Language of Sociability and Commerce," in *Languages of Political Theory*, p. 263; cf. p. 265.

endued with such a Power, as to be able from the Contemplation of the human Condition, to discover a Necessity of living agreeably to this Law; as likewise to find out some Principle by which the Precepts of it may be clearly and solidly demonstrated.” He conceded, however, that in our contemplation of the human condition we must have a “regard ... to some Things which are extrinsical to a Man, and chiefly to those which are likely to promote his Interest, or to procure his Damage and Inconvenience.”<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Pufendorf derided “those Masters of false Politicks [who] cheated the heedless Vulgar with the ambiguous Term of Profit; which is of two Kinds,” i.e. rational or long-term and depraved or short-term.<sup>61</sup>

For Pufendorf, the law of nature which provided the very ground of moral obligation and the basic expression of our good was the law of *sociability*: “Every Man ought, as far as in him lies, to promote and preserve a peaceful Sociableness with others, agreeable to the main End and Disposition of human Race in general.”<sup>62</sup> Thus far, Pufendorf’s prescription differed little from those of Grotius and Hobbes. But Pufendorf’s formula compensated for what Tully has described as the “anti-social friction” that accompanied the move to join in society from purely selfish motives (Hobbes) or from that strange amalgam of instinctive sociableness and stand-offishness, i.e. the obligation to perform only negative duties (not harming one’s neighbour), that we found in Grotius. Pufendorf argued that to avoid the state of war overlooked by Grotius and so much insisted upon by Hobbes we would have to accept that the law of nature required a much broader complement of duties and a more rigorous discipline of the passions than was hitherto agreed. We must associate in a “strategically other-regarding manner”, i.e. perform “strategically other-regarding social duties”, if we are to establish a society and fulfil our obligations under natural law.<sup>63</sup> As Pufendorf put it,

by Sociableness we do not here mean a bare Readiness or Propension to join in particular Societies, which may possibly be form’d on ill Designs, and in an ill Manner; as the Confederacies of Thieves and Robbers, as if it were sufficient only to join ourselves with others, let

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<sup>60</sup>[Samuel] Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, ed. [Jean] Barbeyrac, trans. Basil Kennett, 4th ed. (London, 1728), pp. 133, 135; see also Tuck, “‘Modern’ Theory,” in *Languages of Political Theory*, p. 105; Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxvii.

<sup>61</sup>[Samuel] Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, ed. [Jean] Barbeyrac, trans. Basil Kennett, 4th ed. (London, 1729), p. 128; cf. Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1728, p. 133; see also Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxvii.

<sup>62</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1728, p. 137.

<sup>63</sup>Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xxvi, xxvii, xxviii; cf. p. xxix; see also p. xxv.

our Intentions be what they will. But by this Term of Sociableness, we would imply such a Disposition of one Man towards all others, as shall suppose him united to them by Benevolence, by Peace, by Charity, and so, as it were, by a silent and secret Obligation.<sup>64</sup>

It is clear that Pufendorf thought that the personality could be transformed by genuinely social interaction; no mere consultation of right reason (Grotius) or of self-interest (Hobbes) would do. But to accomplish this transformation, i.e. to make the obligations of natural law effective, it was not enough to rely on the love of humanity (which was too weak to be useful), or on the threats and bribes of a tyrannical God, or on the pangs of conscience; the rewards and punishments of the positive law of the state had to be brought to bear on recalcitrant individuals.<sup>65</sup> Here, Pufendorf was beginning to sound like Hobbes again.

Although, as Tully has shown, Pufendorf's view that our social duties under the law of nature "frequently over-ride actions dictated by considerations of one's own immediate utility or expediency, and even involve a readiness to risk one's life for the sake of sociality" underlines his disagreement with Carneades, it is important to emphasize that Pufendorf nevertheless made an important concession to Carneadean scepticism. For he resurrected Carneades' view that in a shipwreck a person hanging onto a plank would be justified in pushing another off of it in order to save himself.<sup>66</sup> All that Pufendorf urged against unmitigated Carneadean scepticism on this point was that "Actions done upon extreme Necessity, and out of Consternation of Mind arising from imminent Danger, and which do therefore meet rather with Excuse, than with Approbation; ought by no Means to be establish'd for common Rules of Proceeding".<sup>67</sup> Pufendorf's sceptical concession therefore underlined the extent of his emphasis on society as an expedient hit upon for our protection rather than as a forum struck for the fulfilment of our nature.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1728, p. 137.

<sup>65</sup>See Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xxviii–xxix; James Moore, "The Two Systems of Francis Hutcheson: On the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M.A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 48.

<sup>66</sup>Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxvii; see also Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. 54; Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, p. 131; Tuck, *Hobbes*, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1728, p. 132.

<sup>68</sup>Cf. Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1728, p. 135, where Pufendorf prudently reserved judgement on this question.

Pufendorf, like Grotius and Hobbes, conceived of politics as an art rather than as a science. In his *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*, he described politics in terms of the “arts of ruling” and emphasized that these required him to associate with “judicious men skilled in *practical* [italics mine] affairs”. Accordingly, he also believed that politics belonged not to the realm of justice, but to that of expediency, i.e. of practical choices made by weighing consequences.

Pufendorf did not thereby attempt to sever natural jurisprudence from political prudence; indeed, he suggested that both sovereigns and subjects must subordinate their private good to, and actually identify that good with, the good of the state, as Cicero recommended. Thus, just as a good citizen “in fact ... believes nothing to be good for him unless it is also good for the state” so too a good prince “must believe that nothing is good for [him] privately which is not good for the state.” For Pufendorf, it takes two contracts (the contract of society and that of government) and one decree (stipulating the resulting form of government the political society is to have) to constitute a state. The contract of government imposes a reciprocal obligation on the sovereign-to-be and his subjects whereby the citizens agree to obey and the sovereign to rule according to the decree and “for the common security and safety”. But while the obligation is reciprocal, sovereignty and subjection are unequal: the sovereign is by the contract of government sovereign over his subjects, whereas these citizens are subject to him. The consequence for Pufendorf, as for Grotius, was that supreme authority is not accountable. This, of course, opened the door to absolutism.

On the question of resistance, Pufendorf, like Grotius, showed the gap that had opened up between the modern natural law tradition and the Ciceronian position that the state cannot be ruled without the highest justice. (This was a gap that Reid would seek to bridge with his own political jurisprudence.) Not only did Pufendorf allow that the good of the state may override justice, but he also prescribed that citizens must not resist a ruler who is unjust. Pufendorf used his concept of a state of nature to stifle political criticism. Thus he wrote:

There cannot be a more effectual way found out to silence the Complaints and murmurs of the Common People, when they pretend to find fault with the Miscarriages and the Impositions of the Government than if we would lay before them a true Prospect of the Misery and Confusion which attends a Natural State.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, 2.2.2, quoted in Hont, “Language of Sociability and Commerce,” p. 261.



Moreover, he continued:

Since such is the Condition of human Life, that it cannot be exempt from all Inconveniences, and since 'tis not easy to find a Man in the whole World, who is so nicely exact in his Behaviour, as to give a compleat and universal Satisfaction; 'twould be equal Folly and Impudence to oppose a Prince for every Fault; especially since we our selves on the other hand are not so very punctual in the Discharge of our Duty towards him; and since even in private Persons the Laws are wont to pass over slight Miscarriages. Therefore how much more just and reasonable must it be to overlook the pardonable Failings of a Prince, on whose Care the Tranquillity of the whole Nation, and the Security of every Man's Life and Fortune depends? And so much the rather, since Experience informs us, with how fatal a Destruction of the People, and how miserable a Convulsion of the State, the very worst of Princes have been dethron'd...

We ought to bear, says Tacitus, with the Tempers of Princes; since frequent Alterations can never turn to the Advantage of a State... As you would endure, says he, the barrenness of a Soil, the immoderate Force of Rain, and the other Inconveniences of Nature, so endure the Luxury or the Avarice of your Rulers. There will be Vices in the World so long as there are Men; but then these are not perpetual, and are amply recompensed by the Intermixture of better Qualities.<sup>70</sup>

This exhortation to *endure* cloaked a criticism of Aristotelian political science. In his *Duty of Man and Citizen* Pufendorf suggested that when people apply the Aristotelian category of *disease* to forms of government — e.g. when they say the corruption of a monarchy is a tyranny — they are usually not “describing a disease of the form of government” but rather “expressing their own favour or disfavour towards the current form of government or its rulers. For often an opponent of a king or of the institution of monarchy tends to call even a legitimate and good prince a tyrant or despot, particularly when he enforces the laws strictly.”<sup>71</sup> The entire force of Pufendorf's theory of politics, like that of Grotius and Hobbes, was directed against the development of a critical jurisprudence. Like Grotius, however, Pufendorf made the exception that a people may overthrow a tyrant on the grounds of self-preservation. Here he relied on Grotius' argument that it is unreasonable to assume that the founding citizens of a state wished to oblige all future generations to choose annihilation rather than to take up arms against a despot.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, p. 718.

<sup>71</sup>Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. 144.

<sup>72</sup>Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. 133, 137, 143, 151; cf. p. 144; see also p. 77; Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xxx, xxxiv–xxxv.



At least part of Pufendorf's unwillingness to prepare the way for revolutionary criticism lay, as Hont has shown, in his view of the salutary value of political society, which engendered a new relationship between self-love and sociability by which these are no longer opposed but form instead "a distinctive combination."<sup>73</sup> Our conscious purpose in establishing a state is to further the objectives of self-preservation, which derive from self-love. But the unintended consequence of the establishment of a state is the spontaneous evolution of a "social system of mutually beneficial duties in which the participants are, willy-nilly, progressively civilized and socialized". In the process, a commercial system is generated whereby a general commodiousness evolves as a by-product of an ethic based on mere survival. Sociability — the law of nature — is an artificial, not a natural, production, which engenders a sense of right and wrong once that natural law becomes embodied in a sanction-backed positive law.

It is not difficult to trace in this the line that leads to Mandeville and Hume. Resistance had the effect of interrupting the progress of sociability — i.e. the realization of the law of nature — and blocked the channel to commodious self-preservation. It was therefore contrary to jurisprudence and its political credibility had to be challenged. So in addition to defending absolutism, Pufendorf's jurisprudence had the effect of laying the ethico-metaphysical foundation for commercial society.<sup>74</sup>

It was possible to criticize Pufendorf on various grounds. Leibniz was critical of Pufendorf's separation of natural law morality from practical ethics, whether Classical or Christian, because the effect of this disjunction was to derail the pursuit of those virtues which were beyond the scope of sociality.<sup>75</sup>

Further criticisms of Pufendorf were made by his own editor, Jean Barbeyrac, in the latter's French translation of *De Iure Naturae et Gentium* published at Amsterdam in 1706. One of Barbeyrac's criticisms contained a very damaging, and for him a highly uncharacteristic, concession to the sceptics, one which would be seized upon by Mandeville. Barbeyrac denied that there was any such thing as a contract of society (i.e. the first agreement in Pufendorf's double contract theory), emphasizing the "rudeness and violence which attended the formation of the first societies" and

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<sup>73</sup>Hont, "Language of Sociability and Commerce," in *Languages of Political Theory*, p. 267; cf. Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1728, p. 139.

<sup>74</sup>Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxxi; see also Hont, "Language of Sociability and Commerce," in *Languages of Political Theory*, pp. 274–276.

<sup>75</sup>See Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

insisting with the sceptics on the “role of crafty and ambitious men who, supported by force, brought mankind into the first societies.”<sup>76</sup>

Barbeyrac was also critical of Pufendorf’s separation of jurisprudence from natural theology and revived the Stoics’ argument from design, according to which an examination of our ideas of an omnipotent, all-wise and benevolent God and of ourselves as rational and social beings would make manifest the law of nature and give us reasons to obey it.<sup>77</sup>

Barbeyrac also criticized the absolutist tendencies implicit in Pufendorf’s contract of government (i.e. the second agreement in his double contract theory), arguing that the subject had the right to defend his life, liberty, property and religious beliefs against encroachments made by the sovereign. He cited Locke, Sidney and Hoadly in support of his views.<sup>78</sup> In the following quotation, Barbeyrac stressed the need to correctly identify a tyrant rather than the need to reckon on the disastrous consequences of overthrowing him:

When we speak of a tyrant that may lawfully be dethroned by a people, we do not mean by the word people the vile populace or rabble of the country, nor the cabal of a small number of factious persons, but the greater and more judicious part of the subjects of all ranks in the kingdom. Besides the tyranny must be so notorious and evidently clear as to leave nobody any room to doubt of it.<sup>79</sup>

Barbeyrac’s application of Locke, Sidney and Hoadly as a brake on the absolutism of Grotius and Pufendorf was approved by, among others, Reid’s teacher Turnbull. It also reflected Barbeyrac’s view that the judgement of when one’s rights have been violated and the right to rebel, i.e. to defend oneself against and to punish the ruler who invaded one’s rights, “must be left to the conscience ... of ... every judicious man” rather than to a mere “moral Discipline, ... which considers what is Right, and

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<sup>76</sup>Moore, “Locke and the Scottish Jurists,” p. 21; cf. p. 24; James Moore, “Natural Law and the Pyrrhonian Controversy,” in *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Peter Jones (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986), p. 33.

<sup>77</sup>See Peter J. Diamond, “Reid, Natural Law and the Science of Man,” in Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock, eds, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p. 116.

<sup>78</sup>See Moore, “Locke and the Scottish Jurists,” p. 22; see also Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, p. xxxv.

<sup>79</sup>Jean Barbeyrac, in his notes on Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, p. 720, sec. 6, n. 1, quoted in Moore, “Locke and the Scottish Jurists,” p. 22.

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what Wrong in human Actions” on the basis of a rationally or prudentially binding law of nature as Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf had done, each in his own way.<sup>80</sup>

As Moore has shown, Barbeyrac’s influential strategy involved a misconstruction of Locke’s theory of *consent* as a theory of *allegiance*. Locke’s theory was a theory of *trust*, according to which subjects were duty-bound to obey a government provided that it ruled in accordance with the law of nature and did not interfere with the right of subjects to preserve themselves. The only consent which Locke contemplated was that of individuals to live in society. Moreover, this consent was not even equivalent to Pufendorf’s contract of society, for it was a *rational* consent, i.e. not one that had to be refracted through the lenses of experience and history but one based instead on the objective fulfilment of the law of nature / right of self-preservation conditions described above. According to the theory of *allegiance* which Barbeyrac and the others attributed to Locke, the sovereign for his part promised to provide good government, while his subjects for their part promised to obey him: i.e. an actual *contract* was made between the sovereign and his subjects.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, it is important for our purposes to underline Barbeyrac’s attempt to re-establish politics as a science after its eclipse by the Pyrrhonian sceptical humanists, who degraded politics to the level of an art. Barbeyrac subsumed under the rubric of the “Practical Science of Moral Actions” or morality “not only what is commonly so call’d; but also The Law of Nature, and Politicks: In a word, all that it is necessary for the Conduct of a Man’s Self, according to his Estate and Condition.”<sup>82</sup> In Barbeyrac’s view, although most of the “Principles and Maxims” of “true Politicks” are based on probabilities, they are almost as certain as truths founded on demonstration. Barbeyrac maintained that the “Boasting” of sceptics like Bayle in his *Reply to the Question of a Province*, where the latter suggested that it was “certain, that Politicks, as well as Physick, is a conjectural Science,” was grounded on the “Observation of the Behaviour of bad Politicians, and ambitious Sovereigns, and not ... [on] the Principles and Maxims [of true politics] which arise from the natural Design of civil Government, and the publick Good, separate from the private Interest of some Persons.”<sup>83</sup> As Moore has shown, in politics Hume was both a sceptic and a

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<sup>80</sup>Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, p. 16; see also Moore, “Natural Law and the Pyrrhonian Controversy,” in *Philosophy and Science*, p. 25.

<sup>81</sup>See Moore, “Locke and the Scottish Jurists,” pp. 18, 19.

<sup>82</sup>Barbeyrac, *Historical and Critical Account*, in Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, p. [1] and n. b.

<sup>83</sup>Barbeyrac, in his notes on Pufendorf, *Law of Nature and Nations*, 1729, p. 16, sec. 4, n. 3.

natural lawyer in Barbeyrac's sense.<sup>84</sup> As I shall demonstrate, Reid was a type of natural lawyer, but found himself rebuilding the science into a political jurisprudence that was based on a rehabilitation of the real Locke on trust and that addressed the necessitarian agenda that lay behind Hume's reduction of politics to a science.

Thus it is evident that the natural jurisprudence / political prudence tradition from Grotius to Pufendorf had continually to realign itself as it came under increasing pressure from Pyrrhonian scepticism. These realignments resulted in a reconceptualization of our faculties, moving from the notion that these are *native* capacities to the view that they are *engendered* by history and experience. Thus, Grotius's rationalistic assertion of a social faculty with its attendant *moral* obligations became replaced by Hobbes's fear-driven model of a *prudential* obligation to society, which was a mere ratiocinative construct based on self-interest. This model was substantially adapted by Pufendorf, for whom the moral obligation to preserve society had to be produced by enlisting prudential motivations to engender correct moral sentiments.

Through these changes, political prudence remained fairly constantly a function of expediency; the real anxiety was that justice, too, could be reduced to expediency. This identification of ethics *and* politics with expediency was a principal theme of Hobbes's writings. By emphasizing the strictly juristic side of political obligation — i.e. our fundamental *subjection* to law — Grotius and Pufendorf tended to overlook the problem of how the natural law obligations of sovereigns could be enforced, preferring to stress the obligation of subjects to obey. Accordingly, they provided very little critical leverage against existing absolutist constitutional arrangements. Their admission that these were matters of expediency tended to divest justice of its critical content. The natural law tradition had become a friend of repression as a direct result of coming under intense pressure from the sceptics and was therefore to be regarded as a failure.

At this point some apology may be in order for my having presented what may appear on the face of it to be a modern deconstruction of the history of natural jurisprudence / political prudence and scepticism from Grotius to Pufendorf. Yet this reading, which is my own — but which owes much to Hont, Moore, Tuck and Tully, who are themselves indebted to Barbeyrac — may be supported by certain evidence derived

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<sup>84</sup>See Moore, "Natural Law," in *Philosophy and Science*, p. 31.

from Reid himself and from his most famous disciple, Dugald Stewart. It is known, for example, that in his list of “Eminent Authors” on natural jurisprudence, Reid included Grotius, Hobbes, Pufendorf, “Barbyrack upon Grotius & Puffendorf”, Locke and Hoadly. We also know that of these he acknowledged as having the “greatest Reputation” Grotius, Pufendorf and Barbeyrac.<sup>85</sup> When these data are combined with the observation that Reid was in the habit of constructing histories of scepticism (a notable example being his *Inquiry*) and with the fact that Turnbull (who subscribed to Barbeyrac’s practice of linking Pufendorf with Locke, Sidney and Hoadly) it may reasonably be supposed that Reid’s view would have been at least close to the position I have been advancing that the natural jurisprudence tradition was shaped by the responses made by different natural lawyers to the pressures imposed by the sceptics.

Turning to the writing of Reid’s pupil, Dugald Stewart, it is immediately evident that the latter — and by inference Reid himself — envisaged a very different relationship between natural jurisprudence and politics from the one evolved by the natural lawyers. Stewart’s models were Cicero and Bacon, who conceived of the relationship between expediency and justice in hierarchical terms, by which political exigencies were always *regulated* by the dictates of natural justice. The doctrines of Pufendorf, Stewart intimated, had been deeply penetrated by the sceptical teachings of Hobbes.<sup>86</sup> This is, of course, the line that Tuck has done so much to trace and that I have followed in my reading of the history with which we are concerned here. Stewart found support for his plan to ground natural jurisprudence on what he called the “moral constitution of human nature” in the efforts of the sceptical humanist and clerical disciple of Montaigne, Pierre de Charron, to *reconcile* our moral nature with the “apparent discordancy in the judgments of different nations concerning right and wrong.”<sup>87</sup> This is, again, Tuck’s line.

Stewart also found it answered his purpose to underline the following classic characterization of the faculty of reason from Book 3 of Cicero’s *De Republica*, which was in essence the same as those passages from Aristotle quoted earlier:

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<sup>85</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 197, 202.

<sup>86</sup>See Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy*, in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. William Hamilton, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1854), p. 172.

<sup>87</sup>Stewart, *Dissertation*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 106; cf. pp. 102, 104; see also Screech’s notes on Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, p. 654, n. 396; Screech, Introduction to Montaigne, *Essays*, p. xxxii; Tully, Introduction to Pufendorf, *Duty of Man and Citizen*, pp. xviii–xix.



right reason is itself a law; congenial to the feelings of nature; diffused among all men; uniform; eternal; calling us imperiously to our duty, and peremptorily prohibiting every violation of it. Nor does it speak ... one language at Rome and another at Athens, varying from place to place, or time to time; but it addresses itself to all nations, and to all ages; deriving its authority from the common sovereign of the universe, and carrying home its sanctions to every breast, by the inevitable punishment which it inflicts on transgressors.<sup>88</sup>

In Glasgow Reid would rely heavily on Cicero's view of politics, as I shall demonstrate. Stewart also cited two passages from Bacon to point out the proper relationship that should exist between natural jurisprudence and politics. Bacon had of course been Reid's guiding star in Aberdeen. The first quotation outlined the primary and secondary ends of every rightly constituted political society:

The ultimate object which legislators ought to have in view, and to which all their enactments and sanctions ought to be subservient, is, that the citizens may live happily. For this purpose, it is necessary that they should receive a religious and pious education; that they should be trained to good morals; that they should be secured from foreign enemies by proper military arrangements; that they should be guarded by an effectual police against seditious and private injuries; that they should be loyal to government, and obedient to magistrates; and finally, that they should abound in wealth, and in other natural resources.<sup>89</sup>

Such objectives, pointing as they did to a *summum bonum*, were obviously a far cry from the survivalist ethic and negative service duties advocated by Grotius. The second quotation from Bacon contained what was in effect an elaborate gloss on the word *ought* in the previous quotation:

The science of such matters certainly belongs more particularly to the province of men who, by habits of public business, have been led to take a comprehensive survey of the social order; of the interests of the community at large; of the rules of natural equity; of the manners of nations; of the different forms of government; and who are thus prepared to reason according to the wisdom of laws, both from considerations of justice and of policy. The great desideratum, accordingly, is, by investigating the principles of natural justice, and those of political expediency, to exhibit a theoretical model of legislation, which, while it serves as a standard for establishing the comparative excellence of municipal codes, may suggest hints for their

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<sup>88</sup>Cicero, *Frag. lib. iii. De Republica*, quoted in Stewart, *Dissertation*, vol. 1, pp. 174–175.

<sup>89</sup>Bacon, *Exemplum Tractatus de Fontibus Juris*, Aphor. 5, quoted in Stewart, *Dissertation*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 71.

correction and improvement, to such as have at heart the welfare of mankind.<sup>90</sup>

This formulation was invoked to balance the “dark and infernal policy” of “Machiavellian politicians,” for whom the “sovereign has no other object in governing but his own advantage; the very circumstance which, in the judgment of Aristotle, constitutes the essence of the worst species of tyranny” and the related views of “Hobbiists,” or near Hobbesians like Pufendorf, according to whom the “will of the magistrate ... is to be regarded as the ultimate standard of right and wrong, and his voice to be listened to by every citizen as the voice of conscience.”<sup>91</sup> By contrast, Stewart regarded it as the “most important branch of political science ... to ascertain the philosophical principles of jurisprudence”, which, according to Smith, “ought to run through and be the foundation of the laws of all nations.”<sup>92</sup> Stewart was therefore committed to the view, at which Reid had eventually arrived (as I will show), that

Although the obligations of Justice are by no means resolvable into considerations of Utility, yet in every political association they are so blended together in the institutions of men, that it is impossible for us to separate them completely in our reasonings... . It seems, therefore, to be proper, instead of treating of jurisprudence merely as a system of natural justice, to unite it with Politics, and to illustrate the general principles of justice and of expediency, as they are actually combined in the constitution of society.<sup>93</sup>

Undoubtedly, Stewart also introduced the above formula in order to underline the *perfectibilist* agenda underlying the subordination of political expediency to natural justice.<sup>94</sup> This is a theme that I shall explore with reference to Reid.

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<sup>90</sup>Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, lib. viii, cap. iii, quoted in Stewart, *Dissertation*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 71–72; cf. pp. 183, 187.

<sup>91</sup>Stewart, *Dissertation*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 41, 42, 44, 82; cf. pp. 85, 488.

<sup>92</sup>Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 10, p. 55, quoted in Knud Haakonssen, “From Moral Philosophy to Political Economy: The Contribution of Dugald Stewart,” in *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. V. Hope (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 219.

<sup>93</sup>Stewart, *The Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 7, p. 259, quoted in Haakonssen, “From Moral Philosophy to Political Economy,” in *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 230.

<sup>94</sup>See Stewart, *Dissertation*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 494, n. 1.

## Chapter 8

### The Scottish Alternatives

In response to the failure of theorists in the modern natural law tradition to generate a natural jurisprudence / politics impervious to scepticism, the Scots undertook to redraw the psychological map on which these disciplines were located in the hope of avoiding the mistakes of their Continental forebears. This redrawing began with the first professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University, Gershom Carmichael, who also, apparently independently, deconstructed Locke's theory of consent, construing it as a theory of allegiance, much as Barbeyrac had done.<sup>1</sup> As Moore and Michael Silverthorne have shown, Carmichael rejected the psychological foundations of both Grotius' and Pufendorf's natural jurisprudence, largely on the basis that they rested on unsatisfactory conceptions of God. Grotius, it will be recalled, relied so heavily on the concept of our *self-regulating* rational and social nature that he was led to the conclusion that the natural moral order deriving from our basic *suum* rights would exist even if God did not exist to sustain it or did not care what we did. If his governance was *regular*, that was only because nature itself — including human nature — was *intrinsically* regular. But this spontaneous moral order nevertheless remained fundamentally egoistical and its minimal requirements as regards self-abnegation left it open to the sceptical charge that its conditions could be met even by a society of atheists. If Pufendorf chronicled the genesis of our other-regarding dispositions from self-regarding instincts via a process of *rational* enlightenment, Carmichael located the source of those other-regarding dispositions in our actual *passional* nature. Pufendorf's God was a tyrant who inscribed his will on our consciences, bribed and threatened us with rewards and punishments and sanctioned absolute political authority as means of making us comply with his wishes.

Natural rights had to be recognized, Carmichael thought, but, contrary to Grotius, not as a result of border disputes. And social duties had to be performed, he reasoned, but, contrary to Pufendorf, out of love, not fear. Our sociability was not merely a gregarious quality placed in us to balance our self-love, as it was in Grotius. Nor was it a moral obligation dictated by enlightened prudence, as it was in Pufendorf. For Carmichael, our sociability was the result of our natural "longing for beatitude or

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<sup>1</sup> See Moore, "Locke and the Scottish Jurists," pp. 4–5.

lasting happiness", which ensured that our "strongest convictions and aspirations direct[ed] us to respect the rights of every man to seek happiness of this kind."

Carmichael's solution therefore avoided the problem of absolutism and was premised upon the existence of a benevolent God.<sup>2</sup>

Carmichael also rejected Barbeyrac's concession to the sceptics regarding our lack of rationality and sociability in the state of nature:

I really do not see why ... Barbeyrac found it necessary to deny what Pufendorf had proposed as the most important cause of civil society; certainly he puts nothing equally probable in its place. I do not doubt that crafty and ambitious men used their arts to promote the institution of new societies, no doubt promising themselves leading positions in it; but I ask what arts they could have used and with what success if they were not able to give *reasons* [italics mine] for their plan which seemed persuasive to the people.<sup>3</sup>

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As Moore, Nicholas Phillipson and Richard Teichgraeber have shown, Francis Hutcheson, Carmichael's successor in the Glasgow chair, carried on with the attack on Pufendorf's conception of natural law and of God and made refinements to Carmichael's redrawing of the psychological map that would be used by subsequent Scots, including Hume and Smith. Hutcheson argued his case in letters to *The London Journal* (1724) and *Dublin Weekly Journal* (1725). *Thp*

In the *London Journal*, Hutcheson dismissed the teachings of moralists like Carmichael because they "'flew so high, immediately to the Beatific Vision and Fruition and so lightly passed over, with some trite common-place Remarks, all ordinary human Affairs'".<sup>4</sup> They ignored, in other words, the work of education both intellectual and sentimental, i.e. the *historical* process whereby our views were enlarged beyond ourselves and our sentiments attached to more extensive objects. Such an education could not fail to "'engage an unprejudiced Mind"' to love God

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<sup>2</sup>James Moore and Michael Silverthorne, "Natural Sociability and Natural Rights in the Moral Philosophy of Gershom Carmichael," in *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 6; see also pp. 4–5, 7.

<sup>3</sup>Gershom Carmichael, in his notes on Pufendorf, *De Officio Hominis et Civis*, ed. Gershom Carmichael (Edinburgh, 1724), pp. 365–6, quoted in Moore, "Locke and the Scottish Jurists," p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Hutcheson, *London Journal*, no. 278, quoted in Moore, "Two Systems," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 48.

rather than merely to *fear* him.<sup>5</sup> Hutcheson was therefore critical not only of Carmichael, then, but of Pufendorf, who viewed God as a “tyrant[,] who alternately bribes and threatens us to secure obedience to his laws.”<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to Pufendorf, Hutcheson held that it was not “‘Terror’”, whether of God or of the civil magistrate, but our very nature itself that secured our obedience to the law of sociability. Again, the element of education was implicit in Hutcheson’s formulation: “‘Were Men once possess’d with just Notions of Humane Nature; had they lively Sentiments of the natural Affections and kind Passions ... did Men understand the Distress, the Dejection of Spirit, the Diffidence in all kinds Attempts, and the Uncertainty of every Possession under a Tyrant; these Thoughts wou’d soon rouse Men into another kind of Love to their Country and Resolution in its Defence.’”<sup>7</sup>

Pufendorf, like Hobbes, had reduced human motivation to fear and self-love, but he deduced from these principles of action a law of sociability. In the *Dublin Weekly Journal*, Hutcheson argued that by rejecting our *natural* social affections, our “‘kind Instincts, the *Sensus communis*, the *Decorum* and *Honestum*, ... innate Ideas’” and emphasizing instead self-love and self-interest Pufendorf had robbed the law of sociability of its effectiveness and had therefore not progressed beyond the doctrine of Hobbes.<sup>8</sup> This formulation contained clear references to the psychological theories of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, and of John Locke.

Hutcheson’s allusions were presumably to Shaftesbury’s *Sensus Communis; An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709) and the first official edition of his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit* (1711). In the former work, Shaftesbury had introduced the term “moral Sense”, signifying our “natural and just Sense of Right and Wrong”, or “Conscience,” which was itself based on standards of justice and injustice and of right and wrong that exist antecedently to the imposition of law by God. Shaftesbury’s tone in these passages was polemical: he was arguing against

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<sup>5</sup>Hutcheson, *London Journal*, no. 277, quoted in Moore, “Two Systems,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>Moore, “Two Systems,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup>Hutcheson, *London Journal*, no. 278, quoted in Moore, “Two Systems,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup>Hutcheson, *Dublin Weekly Journal*, no. 10, quoted in Moore, “Two Systems,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 48.



Pufendorf, whose imposition theory also prompted a reply from Leibniz. As Shaftesbury wrote,

whoever thinks there is a God, and pretends formally to believe that he is just and good, must suppose that there is independently such a thing as Justice and Injustice, Truth and Falshood, Right and Wrong: according to which he pronounces that God is just, righteous, and true. If the mere Will, Decree, or Law of God be said absolutely to *constitute* [italics mine] Right and Wrong, then are these latter words of no significancy at all.

Shaftesbury did, however, take Pufendorf's point that the State had a role to play in making God's law effective, for he acknowledged that a "virtuous Administration, and an equal and just Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, is of the highest service; not only by restraining the Vitious, and forcing them to act usefully to Society; but by making Virtue to be apparently the Interest of every-one, so as to remove all Prejudices against it, create a fair reception of it, and lead Men into that path which afterwards they cannot easily quit." But it must be underlined that, contrary to Pufendorf, Shaftesbury held that the imposition of rewards and punishments by the civil magistrate did not so much *create* a sense of right and wrong as *awaken* it: law for Shaftesbury was more an *educative* than a *corrective* device.

In his *Inquiry*, Shaftesbury also invoked the term "natural and kind Affection", which was undoubtedly the antecedent for Hutcheson's concept of natural social affections and kind instincts to which I referred above. Shaftesbury also appealed in the *Inquiry* to the "just Reverence of Mankind". The concepts of "friendly and natural affections" and of "love for mankind" were, of course, recurring themes in Shaftesbury's *Sensus Communis*, whence Hutcheson also derived the third and fourth terms, *sensus communis* and *decorum* and *honestum* — in the above formulation.<sup>9</sup>

In his *Sensus Communis*, Shaftesbury defined *common sense* as a "sense of public weal, and of the common interest; love of the community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness, or that sort of civility which rises from a just sense of the common rights of mankind, and the natural equality there is among those of the same species." It was the "social or natural affection" of common sense, not the fear of punishment, Shaftesbury argued, that underpinned our moral judgements. For

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<sup>9</sup>Shaftesbury, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit*, ed. David Walford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), pp. 24, 28, 30, 38, 43, 76; Shaftesbury, *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, in Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John M. Robertson, 2 vols. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), Vol. 1, pp. 64, 78; cf. pp. 76 ("lover of mankind"), 92; Shaftesbury, *Inquiry*, pp. 26, 27, 74, 78.

without common sense, there could be no society. As Shaftesbury put it, "'Twas difficult to apprehend ... what public [subsisted] between an absolute prince and his slave-subjects. And for real society, there could be none between such as had no other sense than that of private good.'" It was clear that Shaftesbury's target in this passage was Hobbes, who, as we have seen, had reduced justice and conscience, or our sense of right and wrong, to the will of the civil magistrate. Shaftesbury maintained, contrary to Hobbes, that "The civil union, or confederacy, could never make right or wrong, if they subsisted not before." Shaftesbury took heart in the fact that our inclination to "sociableness" had a stronger influence than calculations based on selfishness. For Shaftesbury, "Relations, friends, countrymen, laws, politic constitutions, the beauty of order and government, and the interest of society and mankind, were objects which ... would naturally raise a stronger affection than any which was grounded upon the narrow bottom of mere self." The measure of right and wrong was not the will of the civil magistrate but the heart of the "common honest man," which could articulate the uncorrupted will of God. Shaftesbury had grounded sociability not on the *necessity* imposed on us by the state of nature, as Pufendorf had done, but on human *nature* itself.<sup>10</sup>

These were the principles that Hutcheson endeavoured to explain in his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) and his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, With Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728), which also contained direct criticisms of Locke, who had rejected innate ideas and tried to "'deduce all Ideas of Good and Evil ... from Relation to a Law and its Sanctions'", as well as in his *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (1747) and *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755). Hutcheson contended that we "'have Ideas of Virtue and Vice, abstractly from any Law, Human or Divine'".<sup>11</sup> He argued against Hobbes, Pufendorf and Grotius, who succeeded in accounting only for *prudential* obligation; they had overlooked the *sensitive* part of our nature, i.e. our God-given *moral sense*, which approved of benevolent actions and disapproved of selfish ones and thereby created a properly *moral* obligation to perform the former and avoid the latter. By ignoring the moral sense they had made *reason* do what was properly the work of the *passions*.

<sup>10</sup>Shaftesbury, *Sensus Communis*, in Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, Vol. 1, pp. 70–71, 73–74, 77, 78, 87; see also p. 62; cf. pp. 72 ("common affection"), 81 ("natural affection, friendship, or sociableness"), 84 ("common honesty"); Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, p. 85.

<sup>11</sup>Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, pp. 247, 249, quoted in Moore, "Two Systems," p. 49; see also Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, p. 76.

To be sure, these passions could be “distort[ed] by false education, bad customs, or wrong theories” (which produce “confused imaginations” in us) and would in such cases be subject to legislative correction, or correction by prudence. Nonetheless, the purpose of rewards and punishments was not to subjugate the passions to an imperious reason but simply to free them from distortion that they might function virtuously *and* effectively. As Teichgraeber has observed, for Hutcheson “virtue flowed directly from instincts and sentiments” and consisted in “appropriately ordering the sentiments and instincts”. It was this insight that “when men happen to pursue virtue and goodness, they do so because of the prompting of instinctive predispositions” that would turn out to be so important for Hume, as I shall demonstrate. Moreover, Hutcheson did not thereby eliminate the role of reason; he allowed that reason was the “faculty by which we seek truth, that is, true propositions about reality”, which was admittedly *rational*. But, for Hutcheson, reason was not a “reflective capacity”; this was reserved for the passions. According to Hutcheson, *wisdom* lay in the moral sense; reason was only an instrument of *prudence*:

the Understanding, or the power of reflecting, comparing, judging, makes us capable of discerning the tendencies of the several senses, appetites, actions, gratifications, either to our own happiness, or to that of others, and the comparative values of every object, every gratification. This power judges about the means or the subordinate ends: but about the ultimate ends there is no reasoning. We prosecute them by some immediate disposition or determination of soul [i.e. the will], which in the order of action is always prior to all reasoning; as no opinion or judgment can move to action, where there is no prior desire of some end.

Hutcheson did not deny that there could be errors of *judgement*, whose practical effects were indirect; he was concerned rather to ensure that such mistakes were not confounded with distortions of our *sensibilities*, whose consequences were immediately felt. The only trouble was that the former sort of error frequently gave rise to the latter:

almost all our diversities in moral sentiments, and opposite approbations, and condemnations, arise from opposite conclusions of reason about the effects of actions upon the publick, or the affections from which they flowed. The moral sense seems ever to approve and condemn uniformly the same immediate objects, the same affections and dispositions; tho' we reason very differently about the actions which evidence certain dispositions or their contraries.

For this reason, Hutcheson suggested that not reason but the “moral sense from its very nature appears to be designed for regulating and controlling all our powers.”

It was the moral sense that provided the content of the law of nature, not the circumstance of its having been commanded by God or by the civil magistrate. It was also the moral sense that demonstrated our truly *natural* sociability, i.e. a principle of sociableness that was prior to *necessity*. Moreover, it was the moral sense that lay behind what Phillipson has described as our “innate love of perfection which encouraged us to improve ourselves and our society and was capable of bringing us a richer understanding of the Creator.” Hutcheson’s moral sense psychology was therefore wedded to a form of Christian belief that was detached from the notion of a tyrannical God, and to a perfectibilist politics founded on the basic fact of sociability. The requirement to keep the law of nature had ceased being an onerous *duty* and had become an overflowing *desire*.<sup>12</sup>

In order to ensure that the channel of our moral desires remained open, Hutcheson envisaged a “censorial power” whereby the “manners of a people may be regulated ... and ... luxury, voluptuous debauchery, and other private vices prevented or made infamous, which otherways would destroy all publick virtues, and all faithful regard to the general good, and lead men to ruin the best contrived polity.” Such a power, Hutcheson believed, was essential to a government dedicated to performing its duty of securing the “general good and happiness of a people ... by all just and effectual methods,” whether merely persuasive or legal.

Hutcheson’s belief derived from his view that the general good and happiness of a people “chiefly depends on their virtue”, in which case it was incumbent on the State to instil “true principles of virtue, such as shall lead men to piety to God, and all just, peaceable, and kind dispositions towards their fellows; that they may be inclined to every good office, and faithful in every trust committed to them in their several stations.” The means to effect this *posturing* to true justice and “eminent virtue” (and thereby to the performance of our duties of humanity) were moral and religious education, strong inducements to industry and sobriety, the setting of a good example by those in supreme power, preferring of the virtuous and degrading of the vicious

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<sup>12</sup>Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London, 1755), Vol. 1, pp. 38, 61, 81, 93; Nicholas Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 27–28; Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, pp. 78, 91, 92, 97; Richard F. Teichgraeber III, “*Free Trade*” and *Moral Philosophy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986), pp. 27, 33, 83; cf. T.D. Campbell, “Francis Hutcheson: ‘Father’ of the Scottish Enlightenment,” in R. Campbell and A. Skinner, eds., *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), pp. 175, 178, 181; Hutcheson, *System*, Vol. 1, pp. 9–10, 11, 16, 25, 34, 35, 41, 57, 58, 71, 77, 97, 98, 101, 102, 103, 111, 112, 121, 133, 137, 166, 221, 223–224, 232–233, 237, 245, 252, 254, 306; Vol. 2, pp. 4, 19; Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 41–42, 48–49; Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, pp. 83, 84, 93, 95; Teichgraeber, “*FreeTrade*”, pp. 49, 82; David Walford, Introduction to Shaftesbury, *Inquiry*, p. xviii (“reflective affection”).



and in the last resort the legal measure of punishment. Moreover, Hutcheson was convinced that in general "wise laws will civilize the manners and even improve the tempers of a people to virtue." But under no circumstance, he believed, could a magistrate have a "right to extort mens sentiments, or to inflict penalties upon their not agreeing to the opinions he thinks just; as such penalties are no evidences to convince the judgment, and can only produce hypocrisy; and are monstrous usurpations on the most sacred rights of all rational beings."

It must be underlined, as Haakonssen has done, that Hutcheson regarded the State's motivational task of inculcating virtue as a "duty ... morally on a par with the enforcement of justice." "Political prudence to exercise the rights vested in magistrates wisely according to the several exigencies of publick affairs," or, as Hutcheson elsewhere put it, "justice prudently administred", was therefore an aid to natural jurisprudence and properly subservient to it, although it must be emphasized that political prudence *refracted* the requirements of justice. Political prudence did not thereby degenerate into the prerogative of mere superior power: a "ruler's tittle to the subjection of the people ... in oppressive and absurd plans [of government] ... is no better than that of a robber's to any money he had by force compelled one to promise him." Thus, Hutcheson observed that "some publick interests of societies may justify such Agrarian Laws as put a stop to the immoderate acquisitions of private citizens which may prove dangerous to the state, tho' they be made without any particular injury". Moreover, when hereditary honours are bestowed as "political rewards, they must not be employed in exact proportion to the degrees of moral goodness, but as they shall most encourage the virtues most necessary to the state." Political prudence also had a role to play in punishments, since the

end of punishment is the general safety; the precise measure of human punishment is the necessity of preventing certain crimes for the publick safety, and not always the moral turpitude of the actions; tho' this often is proportioned to the detriment arising from crimes. But as it is not always so, some of the worst vices must go unpunished ... and some actions very dangerous to the community, and yet flowing from no great depravity of heart, must be restrained by great severity.

Finally, it may be pointed out that the right of resistance, though grounded on the most solid title of natural jurisprudence, i.e. that of the moral sense, of which every individual is a judge, must sometimes be restrained with a view to avoiding greater injustice. By the same token, for Hutcheson the right of resistance applied not only against *legal* violations on the part of governors but also against excessive *prudence*. The arbiter of pleas for *prudential* leeway remained the *moral* sense of an honest



person, which was also the standard of the law of nature and of the rights and duties deriving from it. If this seems paradoxical, it would be well to consider that Hutcheson conceived of our *summum bonum* as a single, self-regulating system in which conflicts were merely apparent and therefore never insuperable. The object of the political prudence was to mirror the virtuous desires of the soul in a body of wise and just laws.<sup>13</sup>

Thus far, I have argued that Hutcheson conceived his own psychological teaching as an explication of Shaftesbury's ethical theory and in response to the moral scepticism of Locke. But I shall now show that Hutcheson's natural jurisprudence / political prudence was also formulated as a reply to the moral and political scepticism of Bernard Mandeville, who had been critical of Shaftesbury and with whom Hutcheson carried on a debate in print. I have deferred my consideration of Mandeville until the present moment because it was the combination of Hutcheson's psychology with Mandeville's scepticism — as much as anything — that produced the ethical and political teaching of Hume.

Like Hobbes, Mandeville denied the existence of the *summum bonum* which was so important to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.<sup>14</sup> Mandeville denounced the "hunting" after Shaftesbury's "*Pulchrum & Honestum*" as "not much better than a Wild-Goose-Chace that is but little to be depended upon" not only because the "excellency and real worth of things are most commonly precarious and alterable as Modes and Customs vary" (which underlined, as M.M. Goldsmith has pointed out, the sceptical point that reason could not "establish a true standard of virtue") but also because "generous Notions concerning the natural Goodness of Man are hurtful". As Mandeville put it, explicitly mocking Shaftesbury: "imaginary Notions that Men may be Virtuous without Self-denial are a vast Inlet to Hypocrisy, which being once made habitual, we must not only deceive others, but likewise become altogether unknown to our selves".

Mandeville later elaborated on this point, introducing a further sceptical twist when he observed that Shaftesbury's doctrine "furnish[ed] Men with a more obvious Handle, and a greater Opportunity of counterfeiting the Love of Society and Regard to the

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<sup>13</sup>Hutcheson, *System*, Vol. 1, pp. 323, 327; Vol. 2, pp. 217, 253, 265, 277, 310, 311, 331, 333, 347; Francis Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (Glasgow, 1747), in *Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson*, facsimile ed. prepared by Bernhard Fabian, 7 vols. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969), Vol. 4, p. 120, quoted in Haakonssen, "Hugo Grotius," *Political Theory* 13, no. 2 (May 1985), pp. 258–259; cf. Hutcheson, *System*, Vol. 1, pp. 222, 223–224; Vol. 2, pp. 35, 40–41, 112, 126, 187, 226, 227, 232, 247, 248, 259, 273, 274, 275, 317, 330, 344, 345.

<sup>14</sup>See F.B. Kaye, Introduction to Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F.B. Kaye, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), Vol. 1, pp. lvi, cix.

Publick, than ever they could have receiv'd from the contrary Doctrine, viz. That there is no Merit but in the Conquest of the Passions, nor any Virtue without *apparent* [italics mine] Self-denial."

The self-denial which Mandeville urged was more apparent than real, underlined his scepticism that reason was incapable of conquering the passions, for (as Goldsmith has pointed out) according to Mandeville this required "another, stronger passion". As Mandeville wrote in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour, and The Usefulness of Christianity in War* (1732),

All Human Creatures are sway'd and wholly govern'd by their Passions, whatever fine Notions we may flatter our Selves with; even those who act suitably to their Knowledge, and strictly follow the Dictates of their Reason, are not less compell'd so to do by some Passion or other, that sets them to Work, than others, who bid Defiance and act contrary to Both, and whom we call Slaves to their Passions.

The crucial passion in politics was *pride*. By the "'skilful Management of wary Politicians'" who flattered us by "extoll[ing] the Excellency of our Nature above other Animals ... and ... bestow[ing] a thousand Encomiums on the Rationality of our Souls, by the Help of which we were capable of performing the most noble Atchievements", Mandeville argued, we were *persuaded* to control our insatiable appetites and resist our selfish inclinations. These "Lawgivers and other wise Men, that have laboured for the Establishment of Society," or, as Mandeville put it elsewhere, to "civilize Man, and establish them into a Body Politick," have, above all, "endeavour'd ... to make the People they were to govern ... *believe* [italics mine] ... that it was more beneficial for every Body to conquer than indulge his Appetites, and much better to mind the Publick than what seem'd his private Interest." Having thus "insinuated themselves into the Hearts of Men, they began to instruct them in the Notions of Honour and Shame; representing the one as the worst of all Evils, and the other as the highest Good to which Mortals could aspire". By a similar ruse, these "skilful Politicians" duped us into "swallow[ing] ... for Truth" the suggestion that they had true courage, which would make them "valuable of their kind," when in fact they were only puffed up with pride and merely "imagine[d] that they *felt* [italics mine] it heaving in their Breasts". Accordingly, these so-called moral virtues were therefore the "'Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride'." The phantom "Self-denial" that constituted our virtue was evident: "By flattering our Pride and still increasing the good Opinion we have of ourselves on the one hand, and inspiring us on the other with a superlative Dread and mortal Aversion against Shame, the Artful

Moralists have taught us chearfully to encounter our selves, and if not subdue, at least so to conceal and disguise our darling Passion, Lust, that we scarce know it when we meet with it in our own Breasts". Such an active self-deception was necessary to make the laws palatable to fallen creatures who had insatiable appetites and whose selfish inclinations made it impossible for them to "act with any other View but to please [themselves] while [they had] the Use of [their] Organs".

Hutcheson seems to have accepted that Mandeville had got the better of the argument. His own task was to try ~~and~~<sup>to</sup> recover some of the ground Shaftesbury had lost, particularly the notion that our love of a moral virtue such as honour presupposed that we had an antecedent moral sense which approved of that virtue.

Mandeville's skilful politicians and artful moralists next hit upon the real secret of the "Art of Governing" (it is hardly surprising to find Mandeville employing the sceptical term *art* to politics; I shall have more to say about this aspect of Mandeville's political scepticism), the "true Use of the Passions," i.e. the "happy Contrivance of playing our Passions against one another" on every level: i.e. theirs against those of the governed, those of different individuals among the governed against each other, and within each person — whether governor or governed — against each other. Thus Mandeville maintained that the "first Rudiments of Morality, broach'd by skilful Politicians, to render Men useful to each other as well as tractable, were chiefly contrived that the Ambitious might reap the more Benefit from, and govern vast Numbers of them with the greater Ease and Security." By this arrangement, the skilful politicians fulfilled their ambition, whilst the governed had their pride flattered. By such "cunning Management" each achieved his "own Ends in Labouring for others". Here "every Frailty of the Members add[ed] Strength to the whole Body ... and by dextrous Management ... [their] private Vices [were turned] into publick Benefits." The key to society lay not in natural sociability but in what Mandeville called *self-liking*, i.e. vanity.

One final point must be emphasized. Although in this discussion I have referred to the prudence of skilful politicians and artful moralists, these terms, as Goldsmith has pointed out, must be understood as a kind of shorthand for Mandeville's considered view of the art of politics: the "device of a personified manipulator of human beings", Goldsmith has written, "stands for the long, gradual development of social institutions." F.A. Hayek has done much to emphasize this side of Mandeville's thought. Thus with regard to laws, Mandeville said:

there are very few, that are the Work of one Man, or of one Generation; the greatest part of them are the Product, the joynt Labour of several Ages... . The Wisdom I speak of, is not the Offspring of a fine Understanding, or intense Thinking, but of sound and deliberate Judgment, acquired from a long Experience in Business, and a Multiplicity of Observations. By this sort of Wisdom, and Length of Time, it may be brought about, that there shall be no greater Difficulty in governing a large City, than (pardon the Lowness of the Simile) there is in weaving of Stockings.

Having underlined the role of *experience* in shaping laws, Mandeville observed that once the laws were “brought to as much Perfection, as Art and human Wisdom can carry them, the whole Machine may be made to play of itself, with as little Skill, as is required to wind up a Clock; and the Government of a large City, once put into good Order, the Magistrates only following their Noses, will continue to go right for a great while, tho’ there was not a wise Man in it”. For Mandeville, politics was therefore an eminently *practical* matter having to do with checking and curbing inventive and evasive passions by indirect means rather than with the rational planning and prediction of political behaviour. As Mandeville wrote, “The wisest Laws of human Invention are generally owing to the Evasions of bad Men, whose Cunning had eluded the Force of former Ordinances, that had been made with less Caution.” But, sceptical to the last, Mandeville also stressed the intractability of certain passions, which was clearly at odds with the ethic which lay at the heart of Baconian — and therefore of Reidian — *science*. Since lust, our “darling Passion,” was evidently “too violent to be curb’d by any Law or Precept”, it was a mark of “Wisdom in all Governments to bear with [its] lesser Inconveniences to prevent greater.”<sup>15</sup>

## 2.

It was against the background of a natural law tradition perennially under pressure from the sceptics and most recently devastated by Mandeville that Hume burst onto the scene. Hume welcomed the shift of emphasis from reason to the passions in

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<sup>15</sup>Mandeville, *Fable*, Vol. 1, pp. 42, 43, 47, 95, 145, 208, 209, 331, 343, 347, 348; Vol. 2, pp. 109, 318, 319, 322, 323; Mandeville, *Fable*, Vol. 1, p. 51, quoted in M.M. Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits: Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 52; Mandeville, *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour, and The Usefulness of Christianity in War*, p. 31, quoted in Kaye, Introduction to Mandeville, *Fable*, Vol. 1, p. lxxix; Mandeville, *Fable*, Vol. 2, p. 322, quoted in F.A. Hayek, “Dr Bernard Mandeville,” in F.A. Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 261; Goldsmith, *Private Vices*, pp. 64, 155; cf. Mandeville, *Fable*, Vol. 1, p. 95; Goldsmith, *Private Vices*, pp. 53, 71; Stewart, *Opinion and Reform*, pp. 66–67.

Hutcheson and also embraced the sceptical principles of Mandeville. As Phillipson has shown, Hume in a flawless Pyrrhonian *reductio* let reason mortify itself and whittle down its own claims to rule, demonstrating in the process that only the passions could save us from the fatal conceits of overweening reason. Moreover, by calling our rationality into question Hume cast doubt on the suggestion that we could infer the nature of our rights and duties from a rational law of nature. Indeed, he argued that the laws of nature were only *natural* in the sense of that which was “common to any species, or ... what is inseparable from the species”, which was not saying much, for Hume later said that a “certain degree of selfishness ... [was also] inseparable from human nature”. Moreover, the laws of nature were emphatically not to be understood as *rational*ly compelling for all time, for human nature itself could change, in which case these laws would no longer apply to us. On the other hand, these *laws*, precisely because they *were* laws, were themselves artificial, by which he meant not only that they were invented by the passions (the phrase “invention of the law of nature” summed up this position), but also that they “ar[ose] from the circumstances and necessities of mankind.” By this Hume understood the concurrence of our “selfishness and limited generosity” with the “easy change” of external objects (i.e. the state of things prior to the advent of property) in conjunction with their “scarcity in comparison [to] the wants and desires of men.” He observed that reason could exert an “influence on our conduct only ... when it excite[d] a passion by *informing* [*italics mine*] us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it ... or when it discover[ed] the connexion of causes and effects ... so as to afford us means of exerting any passion.”

Hume’s use of the term *artificial* in this characterization of the law of nature posed certain problems for his scepticism with regard to reason, for he conceded that *artificial*, when used in this sense, presupposed the “intervention of thought or reflexion.” Yet he confessed that it was inconceivable that we could have grasped the advantageousness of society and given ourselves laws of nature “by study and reflexion alone” in our natural, i.e. “wild and uncultivated” state. We had, he said, only to be “*sensible* [*italics mine*] of its advantages”, which of course threw us back on the *passions* as providing the inventive impetus for forming society and *conventionally* establishing the “rules of justice” (as he otherwise called the “fundamental laws of nature”). Hume maintained that even in our natural condition, after some *experience* of the precariousness of all things that results from our unregulated acquisitiveness, we would become “sensible of [our] *interest*” in mutually abstaining from the possessions of others (although they were not yet properly



possessions). Our sense of interest in this case was therefore already artificial, for it was based on our experience that our most basic passions, selfishness and confined generosity, “acting at their liberty, totally incapacitate [us] for society”, whilst “society is necessary to the satisfaction of those very passions”. This common sense of interest was the *first* in a series of artificial senses that we developed gradually in the course of our socialization and civilization whereby we “follow[ed] the natural course of our passions and inclinations,” but in a “manner [that was] oblique and artificial.” Thus, we developed our sense of interest when our experience recommended to us that it would be in our best interests to settle upon a “more artful and more refin’d way of satisfying [our passions]”, which was of course the “convention or agreement” to impose certain rules of justice on ourselves, that is on the unbridled exercise of our passions. Hume’s slide from the language of *contract*, which implied a deliberate act at a fixed moment in time, to that of *convention*, with its connotations of accident and evolution, was of course entirely consistent with his insistence upon the artificial and unplanned character of our moral and political virtues.

After these rules were established we acquired a *second* sense, i.e. our “sense of justice and injustice”, which although not “deriv’d from nature,” may nevertheless be said to have “arise[n] artificially, tho’ necessarily from education, and human conventions.” Moreover, although we initially observed the rules of justice with a view only to our own self-interest, a public interest became associated with their observance after they had been artificially established as a matter of convention. On the basis of this public interest, we acquired a *third* sense, i.e. our “sense of moral good and evil”, for we “naturally sympathize[d] with others in the sentiments [of justice and injustice] they entertain[ed] of us”, or more precisely with the “pleasure or pain ... which result[ed] from the view of [their] sentiment[s],” and thereby developed a “sympathy with [the] public interest,” whence derived the “moral approbation ... which attends [justice]”. This accounts for Hume’s view that our “sentiments of morality ... were ... built entirely on public interest and convenience.” As Hume put it at the beginning of Book 3 of the *Treatise*, “Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals.” In this way justice and morality, which comprised an entire “system of conduct and behaviour”, were the unintended (i.e. artificial) consequences of (perfectly natural) individual self-interested human actions. The public good was therefore the “natural tendency” of the fundamental laws of justice, although their “real origin” lay in self-love. As Hume put it: “This system, ... comprehending the interest of each individual, is of course advantageous to the public; tho’ it be not *intended* [*italics mine*] for that purpose by the

inventors.” Hume substantially repeated this Mandevillian theme in the following passage:

bridges are built; harbours open'd; ramparts rais'd; canals form'd; fleets equip'd; and armies disciplin'd; every where, by the care of government, which, tho' compos'd of men subject to all human infirmities, becomes, by one of the finest and most subtle inventions imaginable, a composition, that is, in some measure, exempted from all these infirmities.

A more faithful rendering of Mandeville's private vices / public benefits could scarcely be found anywhere. In a direct crib from Mandeville, Hume suggested that governors no less than governed were guilty of selfish motives in this regard, for “politicians, ... in order to govern men more easily ... and preserve peace in human society, ... endeavour'd to produce an esteem for justice ... and an abhorrence of injustice.”

Hume also traced our acquisition of three other, related, artificial senses. The first of these was our “sense of honour and duty in the strict regulation of our actions with regard to the properties of others.” This sense, which supported that of morality, was shaped by the “public instructions of politicians ... and the private education of parents”. The combination of “Education ... and the artifice of politicians” also added authority to our sense of allegiance to the civil magistrate, amplifying the “morality [we naturally bestowed] on loyalty ... and branding all rebellion with a greater degree of guilty and infamy.” Finally, Hume suggested that politicians stoked our “natural sentiment of approbation and blame”.

Hume also argued that the much vaunted sociable affections were grossly overrated. Our natural benevolence was so restricted that it could not possibly have been the principle that drove us into society; it was far more likely that this affection and the morality it entailed would destroy rather than generate society. As Hume expressed it, although this “generosity must be acknowledg'd to the honour of human nature, we may at the same time remark ... that so noble an affection, instead of fitting men for large societies, is almost as contrary to them ... as the most narrow selfishness”, for the ethic that it engendered encouraged a preference for oneself and one's own, which tended to “produce an opposition of passions and a consequent opposition of actions[,] which [could not] but be dangerous to the new-establish'd union.”

Hume categorically denied that by calling the laws of nature artificial he had imported a notion of *arbitrariness*, but by the same token he was compelled to admit that an “alteration ... in the temper and circumstances of mankind ... wou'd entirely alter our duties and obligations.” This implied that natural law was potentially *alterable* by the

intervention of “omnipotence, which is ... able to new-mould the human mind, and change its character in ... fundamental articles.” Moreover, Hume acknowledged that these “rules ... by which property, right, and obligation are determin’d” (i.e. a considerable portion of what, before Hume, had been called natural jurisprudence) were “changeable by human laws”. That is why Hume dropped the adjective *natural* before *jurisprudence* and explains his remark that “jurisprudence is ... different from all the sciences ... [in] that in many of its nicer questions, there cannot be said to be truth or falsehood on either side.” By the same token, it must be emphasized that because Hume regarded as in practice invariable our basic interest in the maintenance of society, with which the fundamental rules of justice were coeval, he could insist, practically in the same breath, that the laws of nature (or justice) were “universal and perfectly inflexible”. As Haakonssen has pointed out, for Hume the “natural principles in the human mind [upon which our interests were based] have conventional expressions ... [which] can vary from time to time and from place to place.” This enabled Hume to “reconcile the idea of a basically uniform human nature with the facts of historical and geographical differences”, Haakonssen continues, and to maintain that any changeability in the content of our rules of justice — their form would likely remain unchanged — would have to result from our being, as Hume put it, an “inventive species”, i.e. liable to ever new passions, in which case “ever new kinds of behaviour [would have] to be tested for their justice.” Haakonssen regards Hume as having made a clear break with modern natural law theoreticians<sup>16</sup> in letting the given system of values in society play an important role in these tests.” Hume had thereby radically historicized the so-called science of natural jurisprudence, turning it into a kind of natural history of moral and political artifice in a way that opened the door to Adam Smith and John Millar.<sup>16</sup>

By underwriting the Pufendorffian principle of interest with a philosophical account of the passions, Hume had laid an alternative foundation for allegiance to government that replaced the contract doctrine upon which rested the “fashionable system of

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<sup>16</sup>David Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 458, 459, [477], 480, 483, 484, 494, 486, 487, 496, 498, 499–500, 519, 520, 521, 525, 526, 528, 529, 532, 533–534, 539, 546, 547 n., 578, 579, 583, 619, 620; David Hume, 498, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, in David Hume, *Enquiries*, p. 308; Knud Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 32, 43, 44; cf. Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 457, 465, 474, 488, 493, 495, 497, 501, 517, 519, 522, 523, 533, 545, 586, 589; Haakonssen, *Science of a Legislator*, pp. 20, 38; Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 45–46; see also Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 463 (“eternal immutable fitnesses and unfitnesses of things cannot be defended by sound philosophy”), 491–492, 502 (“Justice ... never regards the fitness or unfitness of objects to particular persons, but conducts herself by more extensive views”).

politics,” i.e. that of the Whigs. According to the theory then in vogue, our obligation to obey a government derived from a promise, an original contract between prince and people, whereby the prince vowed to defend the people and secure their rights and the people undertook to obey the prince. The people obeyed because they promised to obey and would be entitled to resist if ever the prince broke his word.

Hume, proceeding according to the theory of the passions that lay at the heart of his natural jurisprudence, proposed a very different system of politics, one in which our obligations derived not from a contract, a *pact* in which we indicated our intention immediately, but from a convention, i.e. a *practice* whose advantages revealed themselves gradually to individuals, who communicated amongst themselves their sense of them and recognized the interest of their neighbours even as they apprehended their own. According to this doctrine, the obligation to obey a government arose at the moment the government was first instituted, just as the obligation to follow the rules of justice arose precisely when society was formed. The effectiveness of this obligation did not rest on the force of a promise — for the force of promises derived from their utility, which related to the advent of society — but rather on the strength of our natural interest and accompanying artificial moral sense. This obligation could be removed only if the existence of society itself was threatened, i.e. if there were a widespread belief that social union was no longer advantageous, for it was after all a sense of common interest that produced society in the first place. Anything short of a genuinely public interest would be insufficient to justify resistance. Given the myriad beliefs or opinions with which our endlessly mutable imagination underwrote our ever-inventive passions, it was highly unlikely that such a consensus could ever be articulated. In the meantime, there was a “moral obligation to submit to government ... because every one thinks so”. The “study of history confirm[ed] the reasonings of true philosophy” in this matter, for it was “bigotry and superstition”, not reason, as the Whigs suggested, that gave to most governments their “titles ... [of] original contract, long possession, present possession, succession, and positive laws”. Since these titles were in turn grounded on our basic interest in preserving society that we might be able to preserve ourselves, we were bound to regard political disputes regarding the “rights of princes” as “incapable of any decision in most cases and ... entirely subordinate to the interests of peace and liberty.” Moreover, as this interest was, in its turn, the product of time and accident (or of artifice), these titles were equally time-bound and artificial. It followed that only experience could engender an opinion sufficient to defeat them. In the meantime,

prudence dictated (or rather, we naturally *believed*) that these titles had to be respected.<sup>17</sup>

Given Hume's rigorously *prudential* psychological starting-point, it is not surprising that his politics emerged as a full-blown science of prudence. I have just outlined the prudential aspect of our allegiance to government. Hume also applied his prudential analysis to the duties of princes towards each other. He freely endorsed the Machiavellian thesis that there is a "system of morals calculated for princes, much more free than that which ought to govern private persons", which he interpreted as meaning that although the "morality of princes has the same extent, yet it has not the same force as that of private persons, and may *lawfully* [*italics mine*] be transgress'd from a more trivial motive." Here *lawfully* refers to the law of nature, which, as we have seen, Hume regarded as artificially generated, though based on natural interest and necessarily supported by a certain sentiment of morality. Because relations between princes were neither so "necessary nor [so] advantageous as that among individuals," it followed that not only was the "natural obligation to justice ... among different states ... not so strong as among individuals," but the moral obligation which derived from it was also weaker.<sup>18</sup>

The universal standard of prudence — i.e. interest — applied not only to the conduct of the governed towards their governors and to behaviour among princes but also to the duties of princes to their subjects. Hume explored this subject in his *History of England*, which, as Phillipson has pointed out, "showed [Hume] how seldom power had been exercised with wisdom or prudence and how often political opinion had been corrupted by ignorance, superstition and zealotry." The bigotry and superstition that underpinned the British people's allegiance to their government was precisely what their constitution had to be protected against if civilization in England — which was, after all, the very stuff of which the British public's interests were made — was to be preserved. Political prudence therefore consisted in the ability of the prince to protect the constitution from the forces that had sustained it.

In the factious climate that then prevailed in Britain, this required that public opinion be placed on a properly philosophical footing, for only if the British people were recalled to their *belief* that their interests were bound up with the preservation of their own civilization could their liberty be secured in the face of their own "ignorance and

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<sup>17</sup>Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 542, 547, 562; cf. p. 569; Haakonssen, *Science of a Legislator*, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup>Hume, *Treatise*, pp. 568, 569; cf. Haakonssen, *Science of a Legislator*, p. 40.



folly", which manifested itself in terms of "tribal party loyalties". These loyalties were merely the political expression of a confined generosity, which was itself a self-interested passion and therefore a fixed feature of the human constitution. As such, they were ineradicable. The remedy for this problem, like the solution to the problem of limited benevolence, lay in the infirmity itself: the party system, which was the only effective indicator of the people's interests, had to be preserved, but preserved in such a way that it achieved its objectives obliquely. Attention had to be shifted away from reforming the *constitution* as such to reforming the political *culture* that supported it. The declension from the language of contract to that of convention would have to be mirrored in the mutation of the language of *politics* into that of *politeness*. The British people were called upon, as Phillipson has observed, to "reflect on their opinions and discuss them with their friends" in the belief that there were no eternal political truths beyond that of their common interest in preserving society and that to imagine the situation to be otherwise was to succumb to illusions spawned by superstition. Hume evidently subscribed to the Addisonian view that "conversation was the best way of purging one's ideas of eccentricity and enthusiasm." Sociable reflection and civilizing conversation via the governing influence of belief would attach people more strongly to their real interests and promote stability in the government. According to this programme, the *form* interest would take would be the morality contained in Cicero's *Offices*, which had "presented morality as skills which could be learned in the course of ordinary life and taught men to value the honest citizen who was temperate, fair and prudent in his dealings with others and was respected in consequence." Prudence consisted in "exercis[ing one's] natural instinct to submit quietly to established authority", but not so much out of a motive of immediate self-protection, as the sceptical humanists suggested, as out of a sensitivity to the precariousness of civilization.

The "techniques of prudence" available to a sovereign related to the same standard and were, as Phillipson has underlined, utterly "depend[ent] upon the peculiarities of the constitution and the age in which the ruler found himself." Thus, a

prudent ruler was one who attempted to maintain the authority of government. In the hands of a Walpole, that might involve corruption. In the hands of an Edward I, the utmost severity. In the hands of Elizabeth, deceit, imperiousness and bluff.

If they were to become properly socialized and civilized, modern Britons would have to "stop judging statesmen by impossible standards, and to realize that they could only be judged as human beings who had to take the political world as they found it and

maintain their power as best they could. All that could be hoped was that in time, and with luck, government would become more regular and less prone to faction.” In other words, they would have to become good Machiavellians, “setting statesmen and politicians in their contexts and judging their conduct accordingly.” Deference was due to princes who preserved property, the protection of which was the foundation of society and government; all that was to be disapproved was the “folly of Christians or Levellers, [who] ... called for a redistribution of property for the sake of imaginary visions of a more perfect society”, or ruthless tyranny, which subverted all society and government. In this particular also, Hume’s account invites a comparison with Machiavelli. In his *Prince* (1513), the latter had blamed Agathocles the Sicilian for using cruelty ill:

if Agathocles his valour bee well weighd, in his venturing upon, and comming off from dangers, and the greatnesse of his courage, in supporting and mastering of adversities, no man can see why he should be thought any way inferiour even to the ablest Captaines. Notwithstanding his beastly cruelty and inhumanity with innumerable wickednesses, allow not that he should be celebrated among the most excellent men.

The very same formulation occurs in Hume, who suggested that whereas the “‘absolute, uncontroled authority’ [of Henry VIII] entitled him to the appellation of a great prince, ‘his tyranny and barbarity exclude[d] him from the character of a good one’.”<sup>19</sup>

When it came time for him to teach jurisprudence and politics at Glasgow, Reid had clear options: he could return to Grotius and Pufendorf, or follow Hume, or devise his own jurisprudence and politics. Given the silence with regard to ultimate ends in Grotius and Pufendorf and their subsequent neglect of virtue (to say nothing of the absolutist implications of their politics) it would not have been open to Reid to return to the Continental natural law tradition, although he would have had sympathy for the place the natural lawyers accorded to reason and conscience. Given Hume’s scepticism with regard to reason (and therefore to ultimate ends) and his view that morality, far from preserving, actually destroyed human society with the consequence that moral considerations could not guide our political judgements (not to mention his

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<sup>19</sup>David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, 6 vols., ed. W.B. Todd (Liberty Classics, New York, 1983), Vol. 3, pp. 321–2, quoted in Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 117–118; Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Edward Dacres, Intro. by W.E.C. Baynes (London: Alexander Moring Limited, 1929), p. 38; Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 12, 18, 23, 27, 51, 74, 77; cf. pp. 34, 47, 52, 54, 60, 61, 62–63, 70, 75, 83, 84, 89, 91–92, 97–98, 107, 108, 123, 131, 134, 139, 140.

atheism) it would clearly not have been open to Reid to follow Hume. He would have to develop a new, Christian political jurisprudence that avoided the absolutist and atheistical tendencies of Grotius and Pufendorf and answer Hume in the cause of virtue and a just reverence for our rational and social nature.

**Section 2**  
**Developing a Science of Politics in the Shadow of Hume and Smith**

## Chapter 9

### Philosophizing about Power

In this and the following three chapters I will discuss the science of politics that Reid began to develop in 1764–1765. In the present chapter I will examine the concept of power which Reid introduced in his inaugural lecture at Glasgow College and which would prove to be a pervasive theme in every section of his course. Reid developed his account of power in response to Hume's sceptical view that our concept of power is a secondary construct. At the same time, Reid made an important concession to the sceptics by downplaying the role of reason in shaping political events.

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Not least among the challenges faced by Reid in the task of addressing his new class at Glasgow was the fact that many of the students sitting before him had begun their training in moral philosophy under Adam Smith and would be measuring Reid's performance against the standard set by his predecessor. As he confided to his friend Andrew Skene, "Many attend the Moral Philosophy Class for four or five years. So that I have many Preachers & Students of Divinity and Law of considerable standing, before whom I stand in awe to speak without more preparation than I have leisure for."<sup>1</sup>

Reid's deferential remarks concerning his predecessor in his inaugural lecture on 10 October 1764 are no doubt an attempt to disarm any potential critics by admitting his own weakness:

I doubt not but you are all sensible of the loss which this University & you in particular sustain by the resignation of the learned and ingenious Gentleman who lately filled this Chair. Those who knew him most and had most access to attend his Prelections, & especially those who profited most by them, will be most sensible of their loss. I had not the happiness of his personal acquaintance for want of opportunity, though I wished for it, and now wish for it more than ever. But I could not be a stranger to his fame and Reputation, nor to the Respect

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<sup>1</sup>R to Skene, 14 Nov 1764, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 1r.



with which his lectures from this chair were heard by a very crowded Audience.

I am likewise much a stranger to his System unless so far as he hath published it to the world. But a man of so great Genius and penetration must have struck new light into the Subjects which he treated, as well as have handled them in an excellent and instructive manner, I shall be much obliged to any of you Gentlemen or to any other, who can furnish me with Notes of his Prelections whether in Morals Jurisprudence, Police, or in Rhetorick.

As I will show, Reid may well have been obliged in this request during his first year of teaching at Glasgow and evidently made use of notes from Smith's lectures on jurisprudence at least by 1768–1769.

Reid's next remarks, which must be read as an attempt to save face, were also a prudent attempt to induce in his students a commonsensical receptivity to sensible arguments even where these might challenge their own prejudices:

I shall always be desirous to borrow light from every quarter, and to adopt what appears to be sound & solid in every System. and ready to change my opinions upon conviction and to change my Metho(d)s or my Materials when I can do it with advantage. I desire to live no longer than this Candor and Ingenuity, this openness of Mind to conviction and to information live with me. In the meantime I must for this Session at least proceed in my Prelections in that Method & and with those Materials which my own thoughts & studies and my former Experience in the Profession have suggested

... If I shall at any time differ from [Hutcheson and Smith] ... it shall always be from a regard to Truth and with the respect due to men of so great worth and ability from whose writings I have learned and am always willing to learn. I am very sensible of the honour which this chair derives from them, and when I consider myself as their Successor I cannot but be filled with confusion.

As an expression of Reid's character, these are poignant remarks. If Reid knows himself not to be the architect of new systems, not the singular genius, not the man of the hour, like Hume or Smith, his sense of his own worth is nonetheless unshaken, and to this may be attributed his conviction of his calling as a speaker of plain truth in an age of intellectual seductions. Again and again Reid would show himself to be a man possessed of eminently critical abilities, whose presentation may justly be characterized as two thirds refutation and one third new formulation. In Glasgow as in Aberdeen Reid would borrow from men of genius with the ultimate aim of damage limitation. His conviction of the path of righteousness as the path of *common sense* — a term that he had not yet publicly defined, but which he never missed an opportunity to use polemically in this period (especially in its Ciceronian formulation,

as I will show presently) — is of a piece with his character and ability; if he seems suspicious of genius, it is because his moral convictions keep philosophical experimentation in check. By broaching the subject of *confusion* Reid was showing his sympathy with his pupils, who could not help but be confused by the change that had been made by his own appointment and by the new system that he would soon be laying out before them.

The nature of Reid's "own thoughts & studies and ... former Experience" is evident even in the opening prayer with which he prefaced his first remarks to his Glasgow students. In this invocation are compressed the themes that predominated in his Aberdeen lectures and would inform his teaching at Glasgow: the importance of works, reason and charity; an insistence on liberty, power and virtue; a mistrust of luxury and an emphasis on duty. Indeed, Reid could scarcely hide his ideological commitments. In the background of his remarks were the familiar spectres of Calvinist orthodoxy on the one hand and Humean scepticism on the other. The orthodox Calvinist *parexcellence*, Jonathan Edwards, had emphasized justification by faith and predestination, denying the existence of human power and the efficacy of works. His views on power, at least, found an atheistic analogue in Hume. And Mandeville, confirmed Augustinian that he was, had insisted on human depravity and implied that virtue was a vain conceit. In such a climate Reid had to declare his position with extreme care.

It would be possible to amplify from his public prayer Reid's view of his duty as a teacher (i.e. a shaper of mind and morals), of the possibility of human improvement, and of politics conceived as a science of prudence properly understood. It might also be argued that all of the Aberdeen period is summed up — or implied — in the prayer, for in it Reid reaffirms his commitment to the rational Christianity in which he had been indoctrinated by Turnbull and to which he had given expression as minister of New Machar and professor at Aberdeen. The Latitudinarianism of Clarke and Butler, the Stoicism of Cicero and Epictetus, and the linkage of Moderate morals with republican politics are all evident:

Do thou o God, who gives wisdom to them that ask it of thee, enlighten our Understandings and purify our hearts, May we partake daily more of thy divine image, by the uprightness and integrity of our hearts, the innocence of our lives, by a fervent charity towards all men and by the love of Truth and of Virtue. ... [F]rom a deep conviction of the importance of our present behaviour to our future happiness, from a conviction that as we sow we shall afterwards reap, may we shake off sloth and indolence, and apply ourselves with vigor to the work which thy providence calls us to be employed in. Teach us a due

contempt of the pleasures of Sense, and of the pomp and Luxury and vain amusements of this Life, And give us a just relish of those intellectual and moral Enjoyments which are suited to the dignity of our Natures, and which lead to true felicity and Glory.

... Inspire [the youth] with the love of truth with the desire of improvement, with reverence to thee their Creator and due Respect to all to whom they stand related.

Lord bless this city. May the Magistrats be always endowed with that Wisdom and publick Spirit which becomes their Station may they be zealous for promoting the good of the place Justice, Industry Virtue and true religion and for discouraging vice profanness Idleness fraud of every kind. May they be wise to discern the proper means of answering these good purposes.<sup>2</sup>

The philosophical biases encapsulated in this prayer are worth some explication here. It is striking that Reid begins his petitions in the certainty that wisdom is given to us by God; it is not simply engendered by experience.<sup>3</sup> We need only consult our God-given faculties to get wisdom and tell the difference between right and wrong; wisdom is in this sense innate, not evolved, but requires that we strengthen it by exercise and confirm it by good habits. From this I conjecture that Reid encountered Hume as Job encountered Satan. Reid's response, like Job's, was to bear up patiently, although not without protest. In the face of the temptations represented by Hume's scepticism, Reid was reassured by revelation and reason that God gave us understanding or judgement, and seated this both in the head and in the heart. This was the virtue of Solomon, who asked for a "[wise and] understanding heart to judge [his] people, that [he might] discern between good and bad".<sup>4</sup> Our understanding must be enlightened and our hearts purified before we can live by God's wisdom. As I will show, the line Reid would take on this point owed much to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and constituted a concession to Hume. Reid indicated that happiness in this life and salvation in the life to come lies in "imitating [God's] Perfections", i.e. in our capacity for improvement or perfectibility. Imitating God's perfections entailed preserving the uprightness and integrity of our hearts, living justly, performing duties of humanity and loving truth and virtue.

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<sup>2</sup>MS. 4/11/9, fo. 1r-v.

<sup>3</sup>The epigrams Reid put on the title-pages of his books are revealing. Prefixed to the *Inquiry* is Job 32.8: "[there is a spirit in man: and t]he inspiration of the Almighty giveth [him] understanding." To the *Intellectual Powers*, Job 38.36: "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? [or who hath given understanding to the heart?]" And to the *Active Powers*, Micah 6.8: "He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; [and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?]"

<sup>4</sup>1 Kings 3.9.

The enlightenment of our understanding required that we be taught to hold in contempt sensual pleasures and luxury; the purification of our hearts, that we be inspired with a just relish for intellectual and moral enjoyments which alone were suited to the dignity of our natures and led to true happiness and glory which, again, were in the gift of God, who was the “foundation of true Honour”. Reid was convinced that his prayers would not fall on deaf ears, for “Reason and Revelation concur in representing [God] to us as a faithfull Guardian ready to afford divine Aid to every soul that makes any virtuous Effort and pants after true Glory & Honour.”<sup>5</sup>

Reid asked that his pupils be inspired with the love of truth and of virtue (the latter is also expressed as a desire of improvement), with a just reverence for God (he describes this elsewhere as the “strongest Support of every other Virtue & the onely rational Foundation of tranquility & peace of Mind, of hope and Comfort and Magnanimity of Fortitude in all the adverse Circumstances of Life”), and with a due respect for all to whom we stand related.<sup>6</sup> Their faith would then sustain in them the conviction of the virtue of industry and the application to dedicate themselves to their duties.

Reid also asked that the civil magistrates be endowed with the wisdom and public spirit necessary to carry out their duties, to promote, through benevolence as well as justice, the common good, industry, virtue, and “rational Piety and Devotion” and to discourage vice, idleness, fraud and profaneness.<sup>7</sup> Politics was thus intimately connected with morals. Finally, Reid prayed that these same magistrates be inspired with the prudence to discover the proper means of prosecuting their wise ends. These last two points encapsulate Reid’s conception of politics as a science of the highest prudence. I shall expand greatly upon this subject in the following chapters.

I now return to Reid’s inaugural lecture, and the matter of his making some rapprochement with his predecessor, Smith. Reid evidently regarded him as one of those philosophers who, like Hume, took with one hand what they gave with the other, ultimately darkening subjects on which they shed new light. While Reid did apparently borrow light from Smith, as I will show, he did not see fit to change his method and materials to repay his modest debt. Heavier were Reid’s borrowings from the other occupant of the Glasgow Chair to whom he politely deferred, namely

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<sup>5</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 108.

<sup>7</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 124.



Smith's predecessor, Francis Hutcheson, although it seems to have been Reid's opinion that Hutcheson, too, had darkened a subject which he had tried to illuminate. Reid's name appears on the subscriber's list to Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755).<sup>8</sup> He drew upon Hutcheson's *System* and his *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*<sup>9</sup> at various points through his entire course of lectures at Glasgow, but especially in those sections devoted to private and oeconomic jurisprudence, where he explicitly confessed to following Hutcheson's method. The student notes I discovered make many references to Hutcheson, and are corroborated in this regard by other sources.<sup>10</sup>

Naturally, one must also view Reid's inaugural lecture as an attempt to set the tone for his entire course at Glasgow, for in it he endeavoured in classical moralist fashion to kindle in his young audience a "manly Ambition", i.e. one befitting their rational nature,<sup>11</sup> "to excell in knowledge and in every quality that may make a man truly happy in himself and usefull to mankind ... [and] ... to excell in the station whatever it be wherein Gods providence shall place him." In a passage reminiscent of the Ciceronian humanist 1752 "Scheme," with which he had launched the Aberdeen phase of his teaching career, Reid characterized this life as a race for honour and glory (a formula also found in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*), and reduced the proper objects of ambition to power and virtue: "Power to execute what Virtue desires. & Virtue to direct the Exertion of Power". As he asserted, "Virtue is nothing else but the right Exercise of Power"; that is, in contradistinction to prudence narrowly defined, which has regard to means only, virtue is a species of wisdom. "Power separated from virtue is an Object of Terror not of Love or Respect", Reid continued, "But Power directed by Virtue is true Greatness and therefore the true object of laudable Ambition."

Reid was doing more here than setting the tone: he was giving his students a glimpse of the central, pervasive theme of his course, namely, power. Hence he further underlined the Ciceronian relationship between power and virtue, giving it an added

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<sup>8</sup>His signed copy is in Glasgow University Library.

<sup>9</sup>2nd ed. (Glasgow, 1753).

<sup>10</sup>John Monteath's Notes from Reid's Moral Philosophy Lectures, 1768–1769, NLS MS. Box 32.3, p. 151; see also pp. 35–36, 41, 118–119, 121–122, 132, 159, 166 ("M<sup>r</sup> Reid is reding Hutcheson just now"), 173 ("he is reading rules & laws on nature about marriage out of Hutcheson"); cf. Notes from Reid's Lectures on Natural Jurisprudence, 1765, loose, uncatalogued booklet in ML MS. 891086, fo. 3v: "We follow Hutcheson's Order".

<sup>11</sup>MS. 4/11/9, pp. 1–2; see also Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 40.



historical dimension. “In Barbarous and Savage States”, Reid observed, “Strength of Body Swiftess of foot robustness ... of Constitution ... joyned with Courage and Stratagem are almost all the species of Power that are regarded[.] But in proportion as Nations are civilized, Knowledge and Wisdom & Eloquence and Adress Industry & self command are the personal qualities which chiefly give a man Power and superiority”. As the extent of property increased over time, so notions of virtue were enlarged; moral and intellectual qualities were increasingly held in regard as goods of fortune such as strength, swiftess and robustness were gradually displaced. But Reid was making no suggestion here that our sense of justice evolved along with the enlarging of our views of and scope for virtue. Justice was immutable, whereas virtue was conditioned by contexts, and by history. Reid had emphatically not joined ranks with Hume, Smith and Millar on this question.

The reading of Cicero was indeed a staple of the “undergraduate” diet in moral philosophy at this time, for the minutes of a University meeting relating to Reid’s class in this period state that “every usual Exercise which might indicate the Attention of a Student to his Teacher” included “reading Cicero, writing Themes, and giving an Oration which is usual in that Class”.<sup>12</sup> Good Ciceronian that he was, Reid argued that riches and high rank “may add greatly to a mans power if he is possessed of them and knows how to use them”, i.e. if he has “personal Abilitys”, or, in other words, virtue.

A Load of Gold or of Jewels upon the back of an Ass adds little to the happiness or Credit of the poor beast because it knows not how to use it. In like manner Rank and Place without personal Qualifications do not make a man great.<sup>13</sup>

But while undeserved rank may make a man ridiculous, the man who does not ascend to the station that he merits may yet take consolation in his virtue. Reid invokes this second piece of Stoic wisdom early in 1769 in his lectures on natural theology: “Mans happiness depends upon his own mind not upon his place in the world”.<sup>14</sup>

Reid’s Ciceronian account of power and *virtue* was sustained by a Baconian notion of power and *knowledge* which was also reminiscent of his Aberdeen period. Thus, in

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<sup>12</sup>Minute for the 3 o’clock sitting of the 4 May 1769 University meeting, in Minutes of Rector’s Meeting and University Meeting, 1768–1770, GUA MS. 26644, p. 74.

<sup>13</sup>MS. 4/II/9, pp. 2–4; cf. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1979), p. 83.

<sup>14</sup>Monteath’s Notes, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 88.

his inaugural lecture, Reid suggested that getting wisdom, realizing virtue and excelling in the work to which Providence calls us, whether carpentry or farming, seafaring or soldiering, attending to the sick or preaching the word of God, requires us “in the spring of Life [to] sow the seed of Usefull knowledge”. This is not only “a delightful entertainment to a Rational Mind but one of the highest Species of power, and ... a qualification necessary to the exercise of every human power.” As if this were not inspiration enough, Reid promised his students that “By a Superiority of Knowledge and of Eloquence and Virtue one Man may be enabled to guide the Spirit of a Nation and to give direction to the united force & Power of Millions.” Useful knowledge comprised the study “of Nature[,] Natural Hist[ory] of Man in his various progressive States, of Nations, of the Works of Men[, i. e.] Government, Police[,] Arts and Commerce.” According to Reid’s view, therefore, “a man of Knowledge” was one who “knows many facts, relating ... to Men Nations and things”.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, by its identification of knowledge with power, Reid’s formulation of the problem of power and virtue embodied a familiar Baconianism.<sup>16</sup> What is more, by its humanist Ciceronian character, it excluded a Machiavellianism to which Reid would later pay lip service.<sup>17</sup> And, in its insistence on the existence of human power it was decidedly anti-Humean, for in the *Treatise* Hume had denied that we have any idea of power. From the 1730s onwards, Reid had made much of our conviction that we have the power to produce events, and when he was called upon to teach in the 1750s, his affirmation of the validity of that belief proved to be central to his entire system of moral philosophy.

## 2.

Reid began his critique of Hume’s politics immediately on taking up his new duties at Glasgow College. His full reply to Hume and to the natural jurisprudence / politics tradition — a new political jurisprudence — was not something that sprang from his head entire but evolved over the years at Glasgow. The first stage of this critique was

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<sup>15</sup>MS. 4/II/9, pp. 4–5, 11.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. pp. 4 (“It is evident that in an Active and industrious animal such as man is, knowledge creates power and the more our knowledge of the Nature of Things is enlarged the more our Dominion and Empire over nature is extended”), 11 (learning or erudition, knowledge and science “[have their] Merit in proportion as [they tend] to promote the happiness of human Society, to enlarge the mind and elevate it above low pursuits, & give exercise to its noblest faculties.”)

<sup>17</sup>See Skinner, *Machiavelli*, pp. 25, 30–31, 36–37, 40, 43–47, 54.

his development of an account of the concept of power. Reid articulated this concept throughout his entire course; arising in the lectures on psychology and natural theology, it ran through the lectures on ethics and found its fullest expression in the politics lectures. I shall now retrace the steps by which this climax was reached.

Reid began with the Ciceronian–cum–Baconian view that man is an “Active and industrious animal”, that is, one whose “Dignity ... Glory and Perfection ... consists in doing his duty and acting the Part that is Proper for him.” Cicero had suggested that the “whole glory of virtue is in activity” and, as Peter J. Diamond has pointed out, Reid framed his own action-centered concept of virtue or duty along Ciceronian lines. To Reid it was “evident that Nature intended us for action and that we can neither answer the end of our being nor enjoy any degree of happiness in a lazy inactive slouthfull life.”<sup>18</sup> Reid’s next step was to argue that activity (i.e. doing our duty and acting our part) is relative to our active powers and moral and intellectual faculties. As Reid put it: “The duty of a Man must be grounded upon the human Constitution. If we had not the powers and faculties of Man, the duty of a Man would not be incumbent upon us.” Moreover, the exertion of his active powers brings honour and glory to a man to the extent that he “intends by his honest Industry to provide for his family[,] to educate his children to virtue and Industry, to be injurious or burdensome to no man[,] to be just to all and usefull to his country according to his power” and actually succeeds in carrying out these intentions.<sup>19</sup> In this formula, such intentions suppose that we have a moral faculty that points out where our duties lie. Reid’s assumption that we have the ability to execute our plans derived from his belief that our moral faculty — i.e. active power — was not given to us in vain but in order that we might use it to guide our conduct. Our moral faculty or conscience approves our honourable intentions and directs us to exert ourselves only for the worthiest ends. The judgements of conscience are meaningful only because we are equipped with the ability to act on them. Virtue consists in realizing those purposes that most befit our nature according to the valuations provided by our moral faculty, i.e. those that bring us the highest honour and glory. Doing our duty and acting our part, in turn, consists in achieving that degree of virtue which is consonant with the fullest exertion of our active powers and the best use of our opportunities.

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<sup>18</sup>Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), p. 21, quoted in Peter J. Diamond, “Reid, Natural Law and the Science of Man,” in Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock, eds, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p. 112; *Practical Ethics*, pp. 110, [127]; see also Diamond, “Reid,” p. 113.

<sup>19</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 111, 129.

The attainment of this active virtue is by no means automatic; it requires much struggle and discipline, for it exists only by being exercised. It may be strengthened greatly by the acquisition of good habits or totally undermined by the formation of bad ones. Reid observed that our passions and appetites are “of quicker Growth” than reason and conscience and “ripen more early.” What is more, they are “strengthened by habits of Indulgence before the Governing powers can exercise their Authority.” These bad habits themselves may be reinforced by the “influence of bad example and bad education”. Nevertheless, Reid asserted that the “restraint of our passions [is] in our power.” Where we do manage to bridle them, power is properly said to reside in us; but where we succumb to bad habits, these may be said to “retain ... power.” But neither our rationality nor our enjoyment may be regarded as indices of virtue, for reason may be made to serve the passions, e.g. where we are in the power of bad habits; as Reid sceptically confessed, “perhaps any kind of Exercise may by habit be made agreeable.”<sup>20</sup>

God, from whom we derive “every degree of power we are possessed of”, has given us power that we might perform our duties. Virtue consists in the performance of our duties. According to Reid all of our virtues are “properly seated in the Heart; yet it necessarily supposes some Degree of Understanding and cannot possibly exist without it.” Thus prudence signifies the “Habit of determining properly what ends we ought to pursue and by what means they are to be pursued.” Reid characterized the virtue of temperance as the “bridle of the Mind” by which our appetites and passions are “indulge[d] or restrain[ed] ... according to the Rules which Reason prescribes”. Fortitude “enables us to face dangers and struggle with difficulties that occur in the way of our Duty with a Noble Ardour of Soul.” It supposes that we have the “free Use of our Reason” and “determines [us] to pursue the paths of Wisdom and Virtue”. (Reid thereby broached the subject of free will, but did not elaborate; he would do that in 1765–1766, as I will show.) He suggested that “True Wisdom” lay in the pursuit of those virtues which compassed the “best and the Noblest Ends”, i.e. the “Approbation of Almighty God, to be usefull to Mankind & to behave suitable to the Dignity of our Nature.” He believed that precisely because these ends are the best and noblest ones they are “most in our Power.” He also suggested that to be happy a man need only be “carefull to do his duty and to act properly”, secure in the assurance that God rewards those who do their duty.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 120, 128, 134.

<sup>21</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 118, 122, 129, 134, 136, 179, [184], 185, 186.

All of this constituted a fundamental critique of Hume, who reduced all knowledge to probability and doubted that we could know our ultimate end. For Hume, all “knowledge” was belief and could be accounted for only in terms of custom and habit. In theory at least, one result of this was that people could legitimately entertain a doubt that their obligations (including their political ones) were *morally* binding, as they were founded on mere opinion. Hume also denied that we have any idea of power. Reid argued in the reverse direction, elevating habits and the moral obligations on which they were built to the status of knowledge, and referring them back to human power.

The evidence that has survived from the Glasgow period dramatically reveals the centrality of the concept of power to Reid’s course as a whole. Monteath’s notes from the 1768–1769 session provide a particularly rich source of material in this regard. In his lectures on psychology (the first half of pneumatology, which was the first part of the course) Reid showed “y<sup>t</sup> men have always be strongly impressd with a belief of action” and therewith a belief of “active power” in themselves, or of that “w<sup>c</sup> [is] capable of moving itself and moving oy<sup>r</sup> Bodies.”<sup>22</sup> Reid spelled out the implication of the belief that people have active power in themselves in his lectures on natural theology (the second half of pneumatology): “if God has given to every one a certain sphere of power, mens immoral actions then are not the workes of God, but the works of men.” Reid therefore grounded his understanding of our moral power on immediate beliefs in the human mind which pointed to our accountability or responsibility for our actions, i.e. to our moral liberty or free will.

He underlined this point in his lectures on ethics (the second part of his course):

Ethicks are those Rules or Laws by w<sup>c</sup> we direct our Actions. The object of ethicks is human Actions. ... we are concious of directing our thought & producing some motion in our body, and as it depends on our will is calld human Actions. Human Actions then must be as extensive as human power w<sup>c</sup> is very extensive.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 36. For an indication of just how close Monteath’s notes are in the passage from which these quotations were taken to what Reid published in the *Active Powers* (1788), and therefore for some support of their authority, compare p. 35 (“every Child y<sup>l</sup> know what it is to strick means & what it is to be stricken know what action and passion is”) with *Works*, p. 515a–b (“Every child that understands the distinction between striking and being struk, must have the conception of action and passion”).

<sup>23</sup>NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 88–89, 96–97.



Reid compared a life in which our passions and appetites were “indulged without restraint” to a ship that “drives before the Wind” without a helmsman, in constant danger of being “over set or dashed to pieces upon Rocks or Shouls”. Our passions and appetites, like the wind to an experienced helmsman, may be very useful in carrying us “in a Right Course” if only we supply appropriate direction. Making the characteristic additional assumption that God would not have intended us to “go to wreck”, Reid was convinced that there “must be some Gouverning Principle in the Mind” and observed that we are “conscious that we have power to restrain our Appetites ... to bridle our passions, or we can give them the Rein and be carried away wherever they lead us.”<sup>24</sup>

For Reid’s view of the crucial importance of human power to politics (the third and last part of his course), we have evidence from what is undoubtedly a fragment of an early version of Reid’s introductory lecture to his course as a whole at Glasgow.<sup>25</sup> In this passage, which almost certainly dates from 1764, Reid emphasized the collective effects of human power:

although every individual of the human kind has a certain Sphere of Power and may produce effects that are not inconsiderable, yet the grand Effects of human Power [are] these which must be produced by the joint Council and force of a Number of men united in Society. Such are Laws, Government, Police, Arts and Sciences, (*one word illegible*) Trade, Manufactures War, Conquest, Colonies. These we may call the grand Effects of human Society. And indeed they are of things that concern the present life the grandest & most interesting Objects to the human Mind because the happiness and the improvement of Mankind or their misery and degeneracy depend upon them. We see these great Effects produced improved impaired destroyed revived variously in various parts of the Globe. We see Nations some barbarous and some civilized who for ages, nay for thousands of years have been always the same and can neither be said to have improved nor declined. Who retain the same Government the same manners the same police the same Character. We see other Nations in a perpetual Motion & change from worse to better or from better to worse. From indolence to industry from poverty to riches from ignorance & barbarity to knowledge and politeness from simplicity to Luxury and avarice from one System of Laws and Government to another So that (a) People may be said to be changed every century.

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<sup>24</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 131.

<sup>25</sup>The introductory lecture immediately followed a revised form of the inaugural lecture in 1765–1766 and beyond.

Although Reid spoke in this passage of joint *counsel* (which with its deliberative connotations would seem to imply rationality), he went on to insist that “These grand Events whether good or evil proceed from human operation they are the effects of human passions and Affections operating variously in different circumstances and cooperating in multitudes often without any design, to produce one great Effect.”<sup>26</sup> Reid’s exclusion of reason as a cause of action and his change of emphasis from joint counsel to multitudes co-operating *without design* would tend to indicate a certain scepticism with regard to reason. Indeed, Reid’s idiom in this crucial passage expresses a Mandevillian “anti-rationalism” according to which “reason[,] ... whether it find truth or not, ... does so entirely at the bidding and under the sway of some sub-rational desire.”<sup>27</sup> By the same token, it also exhibits a certain Hutchesonian influence in so far as it emphasizes the prompting of “immediate dispositions[s] or determination[s] of soul, which in the order of action [are] always prior to all reasoning; as no opinion or judgment can move to action, where there is no prior desire to some end.”<sup>28</sup> Such a view of reason, however, would have been irreconcilable with Reid’s classical humanist identification of knowledge (or reason) with virtue, implicit in his notion of the intellectual habit (or power) of self-command. The sceptical view of reason contained in this passage is also at odds with what Reid has already told us about power and leads one to ask what the connection between *power* and the passions and affections really is. Reid’s suggestion in the passage we have been considering is that the exercise of power in politics does not necessarily involve moral liberty or free will: great numbers of men may be said to have power and produce events though they be entirely lacking in those virtues or habits which Reid has already taught us to regard as the very form in which our power is expressed. His position therefore seems at this time to have been that political events are the effects of human power, even where the individuals concerned should more properly be characterized as being in the power of their passions and affections than as possessed of power themselves. This apparent contradiction may perhaps be explained by observing how infrequently men act freely (i.e. as they ought) in politics notwithstanding the fact that it is eminently within their power to do so. This is, again, a subject to which I shall return presently.

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<sup>26</sup>MS. 6/1/31, fo. 1r.

<sup>27</sup>F.B. Kaye, Introduction to *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F.B. Kaye, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 78–79.

<sup>28</sup>Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, vol. 1 (London, 1755), p. 38; cf. *Works*, p. 615b: “as reason without active power can do nothing, so active power without reason has no guide to direct it to any end.”

In the 1768–1769 session Reid addressed himself to the sceptical objection that “No Government [is] framed or changed by Art”.<sup>29</sup> This objection was very Humean in character, for in his essay “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences” (1742) Hume had written that

To balance a large state or society, whether monarchical or republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty, that no human genius, however comprehensive, is able, by the mere dint of reason and reflection, to effect it. The judgments of many must unite in this work: Experience must guide their labour: Time must bring it to perfection: And the feeling of inconveniencies must correct the mistakes, which they inevitably fall into in their first trials and experiments.<sup>30</sup>

Hume’s political scepticism as expressed in the above passage may well have derived from Mandeville, whose anti-rationalism entailed the exposure as myth the classical image of the wise legislator.

By downplaying the potential of “Art and human Wisdom” to generate perfection in the laws of a State and emphasizing instead accidental circumstances, i.e. “length of time, and the experience of many generations,”<sup>31</sup> Mandeville puts one in mind of Cicero,<sup>32</sup> who, reporting Cato’s view, suggested that the superiority of the constitution of the Roman commonwealth

was based upon the genius, not of one man, but of many; it was founded, not in one generation, but in a long period of several

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<sup>29</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1r.

<sup>30</sup>*Essays*, p. 124. Although Hume had in his *History of England* suggested that the Saxon King Alfred “deservedly attained the appellation of Alfred the Great, and the title of Founder of the English monarchy”, and while Hume clearly believed in the possibility of a true “knowledge of public affairs, or the arts of civil government” and of a real “science of government”, he also emphasized the role of “accident” or of “the general course of events” in political affairs and of consequences that cannot be “foreseen by human wisdom”. Indeed, Hume was deeply critical of “Those who, from a pretended respect to antiquity, appeal at every turn to an original plan of the constitution, [for they] only cover their turbulent spirit and their private ambition under the appearance of venerable forms”. He sceptically observed that “An acquaintance with the history of the antient periods of their government is chiefly useful by instructing them to cherish their present constitution from a comparison or contrast with the condition of those distant times. And it is also curious, by showing them the remote, and commonly faint and disfigured originals of the most finished and most noble institutions, and by instructing them in the great mixture of accident which commonly concurs with a small ingredient of wisdom and foresight, in erecting the complicated fabric of the most perfect government” (new ed., (London, 1762), vol. 1 pp. 63, 234, 265; vol. 2, pp. 443, 446; David Hume, *The History of England, under the House of Tudor*, 2 vols (London, 1759), vol. 1, pp. 66–67; cf. p. 85; vol. 2, p. 518).

<sup>31</sup>Vol. 2, p. 142, quoted in F.A. Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 260.

<sup>32</sup>Hayek suggests a possible linkage between Mandeville and Cicero on this point; unfortunately, he does not specify a text-based line of transmission (see *New Studies*, pp. 255–256); *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 98).

centuries and many ages of men. For, said he, there never has lived a man possessed of so great genius that nothing could escape him, nor could the combined powers of all the men living at one time possibly make all provisions for the future without the aid of actual experience and the test of time.<sup>33</sup>

For his part, Reid, although apparently impressed by the political scepticism of which I have been speaking,<sup>34</sup> nevertheless still clutched at the notion of the wise legislator in the 1764–1765 session. Thus, in his lectures on political jurisprudence he observed that legislators are “so highly revered” because “a good plan of Government ... is ... the greatest Good that can be bestowed upon a Nation.”<sup>35</sup> I shall have occasion to underline Reid’s faith in the possibility of wise legislators when I consider his lectures on politics.

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<sup>33</sup>*De Re Publica*, in *De Re Publica, De Legibus*, ed. Clinton Walker Keyes (London: William Heinemann, 1928), p. 113. It must be pointed out that the *De Re Publica* was unknown in the eighteenth century except through scattered quotations in, for example, St Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, Lactantius’ *Divine Institutions*, and Bayle’s *General Dictionary* and Middleton’s *Life of Cicero*. Bayle quoting St Augustine and Middleton quoting Lactantius and the grammarian Nonius (see e.g. Maurice Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, vol. 1 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1958), p. 195 and n. 1; R.M. Ogilvie, *The Library of Lactantius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 9, 63; [Pierre] Bayle, “Carneades,” *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*, trans. J.P. Bernard et al., vol. 4 (London, 1736), p. 130, remark 1, cit. 87; Conyers Middleton, *The Life of M. Tullius Cicero*, vol. 2, p. 430, n. \*). It should be further remarked that none of these sources contain a reference to *De Re Publica*, bk 2, sec. 1, i.e. the source of the above quotation from Cicero. If Mandeville borrowed from Cicero on this count, therefore, he made use of a different line of transmission from that afforded by St Augustine, Lactantius and Bayle (Middleton, whose *Life of Cicero* was first published in 1741, not being available to him).

<sup>34</sup>The sceptical thesis I have been considering achieved legendary exposition in Adam Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767): “Every step and every movement of the multitude, even in what are termed enlightened ages, are made with equal blindness to the future; and nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design. If Cromwell said, That a man never mounts higher, than when he knows not whither he is going; it may with more reason be affirmed of communities, that they admit of the greatest revolutions where no change is intended, and that the most refined politicians do not always know whither they are leading the state by their projects” (ed. Louis Schneider (New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK): Transaction Books, 1980), p. 122). Ferguson (1723–1816) had been appointed to the Edinburgh moral philosophy chair in 1764, the same year Reid had been appointed to the equivalent chair at Glasgow, and was, like Reid, a Christian philosopher teaching and writing in the sceptical shadow cast largely by Hume. It is extremely interesting, then, to find Reid espousing the same doctrine three years before Ferguson’s *Essay* appeared in print. As tempting as it is to think that Reid may have read Ferguson’s *Essay* in manuscript, this appears to be disproven by certain remarks in Reid’s private correspondence relating to Ferguson and his literary plans. (See R to Dr David Skene, 20–30 Dec 1765, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 6r: “Ferguson is indeed as far as I can Judge a man of a Noble Spirit, of very elegant manners, & has a very uncommon flow of Eloquence. I hear he is about to publish, I dont know under what title, a Natural History of Man: exhibiting a view of him in the Savage State and in the several Successive States of Pasturage, Agriculture, & Commerce.”) It is more likely that both philosophers hit upon this formula independently of each other while addressing themselves to the sceptical agendas of the day.

<sup>35</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2v; cf. *Practical Ethics*, p. 128: “one is fit onely to forge hob nails while another is fit to fabricate or to govern a Commonwealth.”



It is also interesting that in subsequent revisions of his introductory lecture Reid would mitigate his scepticism with regard to reason by including reason as a contributory cause of political events. No doubt, this adjustment reflected his progress toward the notion of rational principles of action. In an early version Reid wrote:

These grand Events whether they be good or Evil proceed from human operation[. T]hey are the Effects of human Reason or of human passions and affections operating variously according to the characters of the agents and the circumstances in which they are placed, and & by their cooperation in multitudes, producing, very often without design, one great Effect.<sup>36</sup>

Probably by 1770 or 1771, Reid's formula, "of human Reason or of human passions and affections", was altered to the less equivocal "of human Reason and human Passions", again apparently reflecting his progress toward a concept of rational principles of action and their applicability to political phenomena:

These great Events whether they be good or Evil proceed from human Operation, they are the Effects of human Reason and human Passions operating variously according to the Characters of the Agents and the Circumstances in which they are placed, and by their cooperation in multitudes producing, very often without Design, one great Event.<sup>37</sup>

It is perhaps worth noting that the word *event* replaces *effect* at the end of this passage. On one level, Reid was probably only streamlining his use of terms — he began by talking about events, not effects. But, on another level, his intention may have been to de-emphasize the passivity implied in "effect" in favour of the notion of human agency which is perhaps more clearly implied in "event", effect importing connotations of determinism. In this connection one thinks of Montesquieu's account of how a despot "alone, without law and without rule, draws everything along by his will and his caprices" and thereby produces unfailing obedience as "infallibly as does one ball thrown against another".<sup>38</sup>

In 1779–1780 Reid continued to speak of political events which were produced not by "great men" — as Baird initially wrote and then cancelled — but by the "joint effects of a great Number joined in Society." Reid was therefore still making an important concession to the sceptics. Yet he now emphasized that political events, whether good

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<sup>36</sup>MS. 4/II/1, p. 3. Reid's mind was so modelled on Cicero's that he may have come up with or latched on to a Ciceronian formulation whether he read it in Cicero or not.

<sup>37</sup>MS. 7/V/4, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup>Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 10, 29.



or bad, were the “effects of human power and human reason & passion, operating according to the Character & circumstances of the agents”; gone was the sceptical suggestion of a population acting together to produce “very often without Design, one great Event”.<sup>39</sup>

But, to repeat, in 1764–1765 Reid was still extremely sceptical about the priority of reason in shaping human conduct, for as he said later in the same session, “Man is a being compounded of Reason and Passion, and in most men the last principle is often prevalent over the first.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>MS. 7/V/4, pp. 15–17; Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104929, Lecture 109, vol. 7, fos 67r–68r.

<sup>40</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fo. 1r. The uneasy admixture of faith in reason and deference to passion would remain the hallmark of Reid’s political scepticism for the rest of his life, for even in the 1779–1780 session, at the end of his teaching career, he insisted on both reason and passion as producing events and on the unintended effects of legislative policies (which presupposes the unpredictable, passion-driven side of man). This does not mean that Reid considered legislative policy to be futile. Thus he is reported to have told his students that: “It is foolish to say that rewards & punishments have no force because they do not allways produce the intended effect of the Legislator. They punish theft, but if these laws necessarily determined people not to steal then, the laws never would be executed. If we suppose motives to determine necessarily[,] then whe(re) laws dont produce the intended effect the Conclusion would be that the fault was in the Legislator who had not applied the proper motive” (Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, ML MS. A104935, vol. 4, lect. 69 (unpaginated); cf. Lecture 110, 11 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fos 75v–77r. It is interesting that Hume applied a Mandevillian style of reasoning in stressing the unintended effects of self-love in giving rise to “the laws of justice”, or “Those rules, by which property, right, and obligation are determin’d”. These laws “[are] ... advantageous to the public; tho’ ... not intended for that purpose by the inventors” (*Treatise*, pp. 528–529)). In the corresponding passage in the *Active Powers* (1788), Reid dropped all talk of unintended consequences (see *Works*, pp. 612a–613a), although the notion is more or less implicit in a couple of related passages (see *Works*, pp. 614b, 626a). However, in Reid’s last discourse on politics, “Thoughts on the Utopian System” (28 November 1794), the problem of unintended consequences appears again: “so limited is the Wisdom of Man, so short his Foresight, that new Laws, even when made with the best intention, do not allways produce the Effect intended and expected from them, or they bring unforeseen inconveniencies that do more than counterballance their good Effects (AUL MS. 3061/6, p. 4).

## Chapter 10

### Toward a Political Jurisprudence

In this chapter I shall examine Reid's first efforts at Glasgow to develop a political jurisprudence which would include both the art and the science of politics as well as a formula for evaluating the predisposition of given political constitutions to promote justice. This involved Reid in a serious study of Montesquieu on the denaturing effects of custom and habit.

1.

Impressed as he had been in Aberdeen by Montesquieu, it is not surprising that Reid began his 1765 lectures on politics with the highly Montesquieuan view that "Political is the Art of Modelling & Governing Societys of Men so as to answer the End proposed by them".<sup>1</sup> It is worth remarking that Reid originally wrote "Political is the Art of *Forming* & Governing Political Societys" [italics mine].<sup>2</sup> It is possible that Reid regarded the word *forming* as carrying the wrong connotation, suggesting as it does a deliberate act of founding a regime, rather than the art of re-forming an existing political constitution on the basis of the best available model. The *modelling and governing* formula may be regarded as embodying a concession to political sceptics like Mandeville and Hume, in so far as it conceived laws and constitutions to be the work of many hands over many ages.<sup>3</sup> Yet the notion of modelling implied

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<sup>1</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1r. The contemporary Chambers *Cyclopædia* defined *political* as "something that relates to policy, or civil government" ("Political, politikē"), *Cyclopædia*, ed. by E. Chambers, 7th ed., vol. 2 (London, 1752).

<sup>2</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1r.

<sup>3</sup>Reid's use of the language of modelling so as to answer an intention also recalled Cicero's advocacy of the use of models in eloquence, which Reid defined as speaking so as to answer the end of the speaker, just as he defines politics here as modelling so as to answer the end of the government in question. See MS. 8/I/2, p. 7 (which belongs to a numbered sequence which begins following fo. 5v, is interrupted after p. 2 by fo. 7r-v and contains 22 blank pages before p. 7): "the Ancients framed to themselves a Notion or Conception of a Perfect Orator, as a Model which every Orator should Strive to imitate though no Man ever came up to it. One of Cicero's Books which he Calls Orator is wrote expressly with a view to delineate this Perfect Orator, who he confesses never existed. Yet such a Model is of great Use, both as an Object which every one who would attain any considerable degree of Eloquence ought to pursue, & as a Standart by which we may judge of our own Defects & Excellencies & those of others."

deliberation.<sup>4</sup> In Montesquieu's terms, the most perfect specimen of a given political constitution would be the one that is most successful at encouraging or motivating those subject to it to act according to the principles of human nature that will sustain it, however wise or wicked its aims may be. As Montesquieu himself put it: "[political and civil laws] should be adapted in such a manner to the people for whom they are made, as to render it very unlikely for those of one nation to be proper for another."

But despite his apparent separation of ethics and politics, it was not Montesquieu's intention to justify unjust regimes. He regarded natural law and the obligation that attached to it as deriving from "human reason, inasmuch as it govern[ed] all the inhabitants of the earth". For Montesquieu, this body of law comprised "relations of possible justice." *Possible* was here opposed to *positive*, as in *positive laws*. "To say that there is nothing just or unjust but what is commanded or forbidden by positive laws," Montesquieu suggested (obviously taking sides with Grotius against Hobbes), was the "same as saying that before the describing of a circle all the radii were not equal." Montesquieu therefore insisted that we "acknowledge relations of justice antecedent to the positive law by which they are established".

According to Montesquieu's logic, then, the "political and civil laws of each nation ought to be only the particular cases in which this human reason is applied." The fact that the laws of individual regimes diverged from the law of nature could not, therefore, be attributed to the absence of fixed laws of nature. Rather, this divergence derived from the "finite nature" of the men of which the regimes were composed, notwithstanding their being equipped with a "faculty of knowing"; from "nature [which] require[d them] to be free agents"; from their basic forgetfulness where their duties were concerned; and from their corresponding tendency to be "hurried away by a thousand impetuous passions". From our finite nature, free will, and forgetfulness sprang our *flexibility*. As Montesquieu put it: "Man, that flexible being, conforming in society to the thoughts and impressions of others, is equally capable of knowing his own nature whenever it is laid open to his view, and of losing the very sense of it when this idea is banished from his mind." The source of both our forgetfulness and our flexibility was, for Montesquieu, prejudice, by which he did not mean that which "renders men ignorant of some particular things, but whatever renders them ignorant of themselves." Montesquieu held out the hope that by education, i.e. by disabusing

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<sup>4</sup>The suggestion that politicians model and govern deliberately tells against the view contained in Reid's introductory lecture that political events are largely unplanned.

ourselves of our damaging prejudices, we could achieve enlightenment, that is, just notions of our natural rights and liberties.<sup>5</sup> Such an education or process of enlightenment might properly be characterized as a recovery of prudence or the attainment of self-knowledge. Reid apparently followed Montesquieu on this point, arguing that

Self Government in a State, relates either 1 to the Constitution which it ought to preserve & improve or 2 To the Subject whom it ought to train and Govern, to provide for and to protect. For these Ends a State ought to know itself. its advantages & to know its neighbour States.

Such prudence, moreover, could be summed up in the highly Ciceronian counsel “To attend carefully to the Glory of the Nation” just as one would to the state of one’s soul and to the honourableness of one’s conduct.<sup>6</sup> Implicit in this formulation was Reid’s insistence that political prudence is subject to a higher wisdom or ethical standard. Thus in his opening lecture on politics, Reid also saw fit to explain “How the Politician differs from the Man of Address & Sagacity. & from the Cunning Man”.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, Reid’s explanation of this distinction (at this point in his discussion) has not survived. But it is possible to infer his meaning from other evidence. In the *Active Powers* (1788) Reid characterized the man of sagacity as one “who has had occasion to deal in interesting matters, with a great variety of persons of different age, sex, rank, and profession, [and who therefore] learns to judge what may be expected

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<sup>5</sup>On the subject of principles Montesquieu continued: “They should be relative to the nature and principle of the actual, or intended government; whether they form it, as in the case of political laws, or whether they support it, as may be said of civil institutions. They should be relative to the climate of each country, to the quality of the soil, to its situation and extent, to the manner of living of the natives, whether husbandmen, huntsmen, or shepherds: they should have a relation to the degree of liberty which the constitution will bear; to the religion of the inhabitants, to their inclinations, riches, number, commerce, manners, and customs. In fine they have relations amongst themselves, as also to their origin, to the intent of the legislator, and to the order of things on which they are established; in all which different lights they ought to be considered.” This entire cluster of relations formed what Montesquieu called the “Spirit of laws.” It was on the basis of his understanding of the spirit of laws that Montesquieu was able to say that the “government most conformable to nature ... is that whose particular disposition best agrees with the humour and disposition of the people in whose favour it is established.” It was in this spirit, too, that Montesquieu said in the Preface to his *Spirit of the Laws* that he had not written in order to “censure anything established in any country whatsoever”; on the contrary, he was confident that “Every nation will here find the reasons on which its maxims are founded”. (Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, Vol. 1, pp. 2–3, 4, 5, 8–9; Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent; ed. Franz Neumann (New York: Hafner Press, 1975), pp. lxviii, lxix; cf. MS. 4/III/14, fo. 1r (“There is a certain Character and Temper in the Subjects that suits every Government This has been observed by Montesquieu and it is what he calls the principle of the Several Governments by which he seems to mean onely that the stability and duration of such a Plan of Government requires that the Subjects Should be chiefly actuated by such a Principle”); Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, Vol. 1, p. 6.)

<sup>6</sup>MS. 7/VII/23, fo. 1v.

<sup>7</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1r.



from men in given circumstances; and how they may be most effectually induced to act the part which he desires.”<sup>8</sup> Such a man will be prudent, i.e. adept in selecting the means to chosen ends, although he has not necessarily been instructed in how he should choose his ends.<sup>9</sup> A cunning man is precisely one who tries to achieve his own ends by deception. Thus Reid distinguished “cunning and Deceits” from “political Wisdom” and ridiculed those “Minute Politicians” who advocated a “dark and crooked Politicks”.<sup>10</sup> By this reckoning, a true politician would be one who, like the man of sagacity, “[knew] human nature”;<sup>11</sup> but also one who, unlike the cunning man, used fair means to achieve a public purpose. Thus the real politician was for Reid eminently moral — in spite of the materials he had to work with.

## 2.

The prudence of which I have been speaking formed the basis of Reid’s political science, which, in 1764–1765, Reid described as the “discover[y of] the causes of those great Events in the Characters and tempers of such Societies and in the circumstances in which they are placed, and as a consequence of this to shew how such events may probably be produced by the application of proper Causes.” In the translation of political prudence to political science, however, a problematic gap was opened up between politics and the ethics that underwrote it: “It is not ... the bussiness of politicks to shew how men ought to act, that belongs to Morals, but to shew how they will act when placed in such circumstances and under such Government.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>*Works*, p. 543b.

<sup>9</sup>See Hume, *Essays*, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. [182]; cf. p. 255; Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, vol. 4, lect. 70, 7 Jan 1780 (unpaginated): “the most cunning politician”.

<sup>11</sup>*Works*, p. 543b.

<sup>12</sup>MS. 6/I/31, fo. 1r; cf. MS. 4/II/9, fo. 1r (“The primary Object of the Science of Politicks is the Constitution of a State, and the natural Effects and consequences of that Constitution and this capital part of the Political Science may be reduced to these two Problems. First a Constitution or form of Government being given to point out the Natural Effects and Consequences of that Constitution Whether for Instance it will be lasting or of short duration, whether powerfull against forreign Enemies or weak and Easy to be conquered, whether internally quiet and peceable or turbulent and Seditious, whether the Subjects will be oppressed or enjoy the common Rights and Liberties which mankind are entitled to. The second Problem is[,] having given the End for which a Constitution of Government is intended[,] to point out that Constitution or Model of Government which will most effectually promote and secure this end. It is very obvious that the End of Government ought to be the good and happiness of the Governed. And therefore every Form or Model of Government if we judge of it by the moral Standart is to be more or less approved of according as it tends more or less to promote this end”). This characterization was analogous to Reid’s description of natural philosophy. See MS. 4/II/9, p. 11: “the Man who has an extensive knowledge of conclusions of



Such knowledge constituted “The Principles of Political Reasoning” or, in other words, “the Active Principles (of) Human Nature”.

In his efforts to reduce politics to a science, Reid may well have been endorsing Montesquieu’s response to those sceptics who endeavoured to account for the seemingly endless variety of political constitutions by reducing them to *socio-historical* contingencies — custom and habit — or the whims of individual princes; Montesquieu’s reply was to trace observed diversities back to the original principles of human nature. As Montesquieu put it,

I have first of all considered mankind, and the result of my thoughts has been, that amidst such an infinite diversity of laws and manners, they were not solely conducted by the caprice of fancy.

I have laid down first principles, and have found that the particular cases follow naturally from them; that the histories of all nations are only consequences of them; and that every particular law is connected with another law, or depends on some other of a more general extent.

I now reproduce Reid’s list of the first principles of political reasoning:

The General Principles of Action Among Men are Such as these

- 1 Men will generally be just honest & true where they have no Temptation to be otherwise
- 2 Men have always a Strong Resentment of Injuries and will resist them where it is in their Power & have commonly some Gratitude for good Offices/
- 3 Tho a cool Desire of Happiness & a Regard to duty have some Influence on the Actions of All men yet it does not appear that either of these are the Prevailing Principles in Most Men
- 4 It may be therefore expected of the Generality of Men that they will do things contrary either to their real Interest or their Duty when they have Strong temptations. either knowingly or by imposing upon themself(ve)s
- 5 Few Men will do the most Atrocious Acts of Wickedness even upon a Strong Temptation till they have been long hardned by Vicious habits
- 6 Men always esteem Virtue Wisdom & Power in others where they are not objects of Envy and desire to be possessed of them or to be thought to be possessed of them themselves
- 7 Mens private Affections are commonly Stronger than their publick ones
8. Mens Characters are formed mostly by Education Custom & Example

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Science and can trace them to the principles on which they are founded, and on the other hand is skillfull in deducing conclusions from first principles is what we call a Man of Science.”

9. In a Great Number of Men taken without Distinction there will always be found a few that are far Superior to the Rest in Wisdom or Virtue Power or all these

10. People will not long receive Laws from Governors unless they have an opinion that the Governors have superior Power Superior Wisdom & Virtue or Right to Govern

11 Like Effects may be expected from like Causes, and similar Conduct from persons of like Characters in like Circumstances.

12 In all great Bodies of Men who either meet together or can easily communicate their Sentiments to each other, the Many will be led by a few, of Superior Parts, Superior Eloquence or Superior Character, & will imbibe their Sentiments Passions and Opinions.<sup>13</sup>

In elaborating the first principle, Reid emphasized that “The bulk of Men are neither so good as they ought to be nor so bad as they might be.” If we were to suppose that the “generality of Men of any Nation were so abandoned as to have no degree of regard to Justice Honesty and truth,” it would be impossible for them to be “kept together under any kind of Government but that of absolute Slavery. They behoved to be chained as wild beasts and have the dread of punishment constantly hanging over their heads to keep them from doing mischief.” In making this point Reid may well have been correcting Hume’s assumption about the “natural depravity of mankind”. On the other hand, he reasoned, “If men were perfectly virtuous & proof against all temptations there would be no Need of Civil Government. Men would do their duty without being compelled by Laws and punishments.” This point may have been suggested by Hume as well, who had denied that all men were “possessed of so inflexible a regard to justice, that, of themselves, they would totally abstain from the properties of others”. These things being so, Reid allowed that the precise degree of virtue required in order that a people might, to use Monteath’s report, “hang together in a political government, [or] form one” is very variable. Thus in “rude Nations” where only “Small Property” is known “the generality of men may live very innocently with a small degree of Virtue.” On the other hand, in other “States of Society” where a “Difference of Ranks great Trust [and] Refinements of high living” are exhibited “there will be both greater exertions of Virtue in some individuals and greater corruption in other[s].” Here Reid was evidently making a concession to Smith, who had demonstrated how the progress of virtue followed the evolution of property. But he back-pedalled vigorously (evidently appealing to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson) by insisting, in Monteath’s report, that “there are none so wicked but y<sup>l</sup> they have some publick Affections love to their Children acquaintances & friend[s] to their King &

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<sup>13</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1r.

Country. There have been Heros in every age & we hope will be.” Thus for Reid a basic moral impulse was inherent in man and though it may become enlarged with improvements in society the moral spark was not kindled or generated by society in the first instance.<sup>14</sup>

Principles 3–4 clearly embody an important concession to the Mandevillian sceptic. A cool desire of happiness and a regard to duty were principles that Reid would later identify as rational principles of action. By conceding that they are not the prevailing principles in most men, he was admitting the relative impotence of reason. Reid had thereby also undercut his estimate of the extent of human power, or at least the most noble forms of it. Reid underlined this sceptical concession in principles 5 and 8, where he emphasized the role of education, custom and habit, and example in shaping the characters of men. As he put it, men are “much disposed to take the Rules of Conduct from Fashion rather than from the Dictates of Reason”. Moreover, conducting ourselves by these inferior rules, he implied in another place, “may by habit be made agreeable” in such a way that we really end up pursuing a counterfeit of happiness according to spurious principles.<sup>15</sup>

In a second important concession to Mandeville (i.e. in principle 6), Reid suggested that even when men are strongly tempted and consequently act “contrary to their dewty & real happiness ... they have always a regard to virtue & ... cloak their guilt under a shew of virtue.” To the same effect was Reid’s observation in his lectures on our duties to God that in order to preserve his character, a man will often “cultivate some good Quality which may cover all his faults”. What is more such qualities must be endorsed by the good opinion of others, and “dignified with the sacred Names of Virtue, Honour or Religion.” Thus military glory “in the Estimation of most Men covers a multitude of imperfections and even of great Vices.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hume, *Essays*, pp. 24, 474; AUL MSS. 4/III/1, fo. 1r; 4/III/3, fo. 5r–v; Montcath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 205–207; cf. Hume, *Treatise*, p. 411; Baird’s Notes, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lectures 109–110, i.e. 6 Apr, 11 Apr 1780, fos 73v–75v.

<sup>15</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 111, 128; cf. p. 120. Principle 8 echoes Reid’s highly sceptical observation in the *Inquiry* (1764) that “Most men continue all their days to be just what Nature and human education made them. Their manners, their opinions, their virtues, and their vices, are all got by habit, imitation, and instruction; and reason has little or no share in forming them” (*Works*, p. 201a). In this connection one thinks of James Boswell’s very Humean description of how an “ill-regulated mind [his own] assembled scattered ideas and composed from them a principle for action” (B to Rousseau, 3 Oct 1765, from *Boswell on the Grand Tour* (1953), quoted in *The Age of the Grand Tour*, comp. Paul and Elizabeth Elek and Moira Johnston (London: Paul Elek Productions Ltd, 1967), p. 96).

<sup>16</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 123–124, 132.

Principle 10 codified Reid's Ciceronian–cum–Humean account of sources of authority. To this Reid added a Montesquieuian and a Humean–cum–Smithian dimension to his lectures on political jurisprudence.<sup>17</sup> “There are certain Instincts that lead men to submission”. These were: “Respect to Age and Wisdom and Valour ... to the Rich & powerfull & especially to those who have had riches and power transmitted to them through a long Race of Ancestors.” “These instincts”, Reid continued, “ground a Natural Subordination and men more easily submit to the Government of Such”.<sup>18</sup> It is instinct, then, not reason, that underpins opinion or belief as a source of authority. Hence Reid's remark in his abstract of Wise Club Question 35 on instilling principles in children (handled on 1 April 1760): “The Variety of Opinions in Matters of Religion [and] Philosophy[,] in Politicks[,] in particular Questions of Right and wrong[,] arises more from [the influence of passions, appetites and affections] than from any difference of mens intellectual powers[.] Leaders in Philosophy & Religion often acted by pride. Followers by Undue affection to their leaders”.<sup>19</sup>

Reid's indebtedness to Hume on this point cannot be emphasized enough, for it shows that as Reid went along with Hume in the *scientific* enterprise of tracing political phenomena back to their sources in the human mind, he found himself making sceptical concession after sceptical concession to Hume in his characterization of human nature. Moreover, the sceptical principle of which I have been speaking must be regarded as an oblique criticism of Harrington, who conceived of the “Ballance of property as the onely Sourse of Dominion”. Tracing authority back to principles in the human mind, Reid observed that “Such a Ballance of Property as he prescribes is not sufficient for the Establishment or Continuance of a Republick.” Only *opinion* was adequate to these purposes.

With principle 11 Reid translated his strong Newtonian bias into the language of *character* that would become such an important vehicle for his political jurisprudence.<sup>20</sup> While he had made an important concession to theorists of manners

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<sup>17</sup>See Haakonssen, Commentary on *Practical Ethics*, p. 368, n. [3].

<sup>18</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2v.

<sup>19</sup>MS. 2/II/1, fo. 2r. In his abstract of Question 44 on moral character (discussed on 15 April 1761) Reid elaborated on this sceptical concession: “The longer a principle has been entertained it strikes the deeper root and is the more immoveable altho the evidence upon which it was first received is perhaps forgot and it is not in our power to recall it. It is this that makes conversions either from religious or political Principles so rare & so difficult[.] It is by knowing a mans Principles rather than by the size of his understanding that we can make a shrewd conjecture what his opinion will be on any point that is proposed to him” (MS. 2/II/13, fos 3v–4r).

<sup>20</sup>The Newtonian influence, one also compatible with Butler, may be detected in Reid's lecture notes on natural philosophy and in a set of student notes from the lectures on this subject which he



such as Hume in speaking in principle 8 of character as the product of such things as custom and habit, he did not conceive that there was any necessity involved in the formation of the character of a particular individual. Theoretically, at least, control over this was within the individual's power, although as a matter of practice his passions might get the better of his reason and ensure that prejudice took hold so thoroughly that reason could not afterwards break through.

Finally, in principle 12 Reid paraphrased the following sceptical remark from Hume's essay "Of the First Principles of Government" (1741):

Nothing appears more surprizing to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded.<sup>21</sup>

There is no mention of judgement or reason or knowledge in Reid's paraphrase, only of sentiment and passion and opinion. At a later stage of his encounter with Hume, Reid moved from the discourse of "Sentiments Passions and Opinions" to that of "Judgement", thus signalling a retreat from his earlier sympathy with Hume's scepticism with regard to reason. Reid's new paraphrase was as follows:

When we consider the Nature of Political Government, there is something in it that may seem at first view strange and difficult to be accounted for. In all Governments a few govern the Many[. T]he greater part are led & there is perhaps not above one hundred part of

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delivered in the 1757–1758 session. Thus items 2–4 on Reid's list from the Aberdeen period "Of the Order in Which Natural Philosophy ought to be taught" were the "Laws of Philosophizing from S<sup>r</sup> Is Newton Princ Lib 3 ... Def from the same Lib 1 ... 3 Laws of Nature from the Same with their Corolaries" (MS. 6/V/10, fo. 1r). In the *Inquiry* Reid described Newton's *regulæ philosophandi* as "maxims of common sense ... [which] are practised every day in common life" (*Works*, p. [97]b). In a third reference from the Aberdeen period, Reid explicitly drew the connection between Newton's *regulæ* and induction: the "Rules of Philosophizing" were the rules for "reasoning by Induction" (Notes from Reid's Lectures on Natural Philosophy, 1757–1758, p. 7), which consisted of observation of facts and experimentation, the reduction of these facts to general rules or laws and the application of these rules, in turn, "to account for other effects, or to direct us in the production of them" (*Works*, p. [97]b). In the student notes rule 2 reads as follows: "Like effects have the same or like Causes" (AUL MS. K160, pp. 7–8). Reid observed in his 1757–1758 lectures on natural philosophy "that all Prudence, Skill & fore-sight in Life depends on this, that we have observed things to have happened in the course of Nature according to certain rules or Laws, & expect like Events in like circumstances in the time to come" (MS. K160, p. 4; cf. p. 5).

<sup>21</sup>*Essays*, p. [32].



whole that can be said to direct and govern in matters that concern the whole Body, the Multitude are swayed by the Judgement of a few.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting that in this account Reid characterizes opinion as deference to the *judgement* of the few — in other words, to the neo-Ciceronian personal qualifications of which I have spoken, not to an irrelevant regard for the past, i.e. the “Attachment of the People to ... Old Forms”.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.

Reid’s highly Montesquieuian account of the nature of a despotic government provides an illuminating gloss on the sceptical concessions he made in his list of first principles. Hume had criticized Montesquieu for “suppos[ing] all right to be founded on certain *rappports* or relations”; in his opinion, this was a “system ... that ... never will be reconciled with true philosophy.”<sup>24</sup> Reid was rather more sympathetic in his reading of Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*, for he evidently regarded this work as a probing analysis of the denaturing effects of custom and habit on a people’s sense of natural right and liberty and on their prince’s concept of glory — in other words, on their very capacity for law and justice. Indeed, the critical phase of Reid’s political jurisprudence may be regarded as a realistic appraisal of our ability to overcome the prejudice of convention; its role was to detect prejudice and remind people of themselves, to hold the mirror up to debased nature in the hope that it might produce a shock of recognition.

Despotism was a form of government founded not on understanding but on ignorance, not on law but on caprice. It was a species of regime erected on prejudice and sustained by fear. Its constitution required that “Subjects be trained by Education and Instruction of their Priests to absolute & unlimited submission to the will of [their] Superiors as to the will of Heaven.”<sup>25</sup> Everything depended on the humour of the army or on the ability of the women and eunuchs to constantly invent new ways to gratify the despot, to whom the business of government was of no consequence. The despot has no ~~no~~ virtue, yet he must be esteemed a god. He rules not to make his people happier, but from a “delight in dominating other souls”:

<sup>22</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 6v; cf. MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1r.

<sup>23</sup>MS. 4/III/6, fo. 1r; cf. Hume, *Essays*, p. 464, for example.

<sup>24</sup>David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, in *Enquiries*, p. 197, n. 1.

<sup>25</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1v; cf. MS. 8/IV/10, fos 1v–2r.

He is neither endowed with that Knowledge that enlarges and elevates a human Mind, nor with those habits of Prudence Selfcommand temperance fortitude Justice and goodness which constitute real Worth and Merit. Yet with all this worthlessness & real Meanness he conceives himself a God, or something of a nature far superior to other Men. And every thing that is said or done to him every thing about him conspires to fix this vain conceit of his own Superiority.<sup>26</sup>

If the despot artificially elevates himself, so too the people must be in the habit of effacing themselves, for "Every man that is eminent in Riches in Authority or in Parts and in Knowledge becomes a mark to the avarice or envy or jealousy of those who have him absolutely in their power."<sup>27</sup>

Despotism eliminates the possibility of active virtue and therewith of "true Glory & Honour" and happiness, engendering instead only the passive virtues of "Patience Contentment Resignation Contempt of Riches & a Contemplative Devotion Caution Secrecy & fair Dealing". Pusillanimity therefore comes to replace fortitude, as the "Polish of Life ... enervates the Mind" of the despot. The fear he inspires "depresses the Mind[s] of the people ... & deprives [them] of [their] Reason". True, such passive virtues may bring a measure of "tranquility & peace of Mind" to their possessors but the tranquillity to which the regime as a whole aspires is not a form of "peace[;] it is the silence of towns that the enemy is ready to occupy." Nor can "true Wisdom" be attained, for "manly prudence" can have no place where there is no opportunity to acquire self-knowledge or practise self-command.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the very road to moral and intellectual virtue is closed, for under despotic government "Learning will commonly be discouragd".<sup>29</sup> Moreover, because of the general opinion those subject to despotism have of the insecurity of their property and fortunes (engendered by the constant threat of confiscation), industry is discouraged and "Commerce can never flourish".

Not surprisingly, therefore, if commerce were ever to take hold in a despotic country, the effects of the regime would be reversed, for commerce "cures destructive prejudices". The freeing of the will implicit in education and enlightenment would interrupt the infallible connection between cause (the despot's capricious will) and

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<sup>26</sup>MS. 4/III/5, fo. 1r-v.

<sup>27</sup>MS. 4/III/5, fo. 1v.

<sup>28</sup>Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler et al., p. 60; *Practical Ethics*, pp. 108, 119, 129, 130, 135, 136, 179; cf. pp. 121, [127], 136, [140]; cf. *Works*, p. 636a.

<sup>29</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1v.

effect (his subjects' fearful obedience). As Montesquieu put it: "Knowledge makes men gentle, and reason inclines toward humanity; only prejudices cause these to be renounced."<sup>30</sup>

In all of this Reid was not simply describing phenomena seen in history, but putting forward a layered account of human nature, one that posited at base a natural predisposition to prefer freedom to slavery and a natural "sense of the Rights and privileges of human Nature". This predisposition was at the same time overlaid with custom and habituation, which shaped our responses to physical circumstances (climate) and to moral ones (i.e. political constitutions).<sup>31</sup> It should also be underlined that although Reid, in Montesquieuian fashion, regarded our responses to moral and physical circumstances as parallel mechanisms, he nevertheless pulled back from Montesquieu's determinism (just as he had done in Aberdeen) and emphasized his own commitment to free will. Even so, while in his early days at Glasgow Reid was willing to entertain the occasional argument from physical causes, on balance he inclined more towards explanations from moral ones.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler, *et al.*, pp. 249, 283; cf. pp. 18, 21, 27, 34, 58, 59, 75, 128, 189, 211, 214, 235, 236, 245, 246, 248, 251, 252, 258, 265, 269, 270, 278, 284, 294, 308–309, 310, 311, 467, 618.

<sup>31</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2r. It is worth emphasizing that at this point Reid was undoubtedly taking a polite, Ciceronian, line for he seems to have followed Shaftesbury in translating the *sensus communis* of the Roman poets Juvenal and Horace by "Humanity, Natural Affection, or a just Sense of the common Rights of Men." Although Reid would later define common sense not so much in terms of such "qualities of the heart" as in terms of the "natural powers of the Understanding" (as I will show), his tendency here is to regard our natural sense of the rights and privileges of human nature as part of common sense. When read in this light, Reid's political jurisprudence can be understood as a criticism of regimes on the basis of their faithfulness to a standard which common sense gives us to expect. (MS. 2/III/7, pp. 2–3; cf. p. 13 ("the natural Rights of all men"); Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, "An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John H. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), vol. 1, p. 70 ("sense of public weal, and of the common interest; love of the community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness, or that sort of civility which rises from a just sense of the common rights of mankind, and the natural equality there is among those of the same species"); see also p. 71, n. [1]; MSS. 2/III/8, p. 6 ("Principles of Common Sense Cicero calls them *Naturæ Judicia*, & *Judicia communibus hominum sensibus infixa*"); 6/I/15, fo. 1v ("[common sense] is used in the plural by Cicero").)

<sup>32</sup>Thus, as he wrote to Andrew Skene in Aberdeen, "The common people here have a gloom in their countenance which I am at a loss whether to ascribe to their religion or to the Air and Climate. There is certainly more of religion amon(g) the common people in this town than in Aberdeen and although it has a gloomy Ent(h)usiastical Cast, yet I think it makes them tame & sober." (R to Dr Andrew Skene, 14 Nov 1764, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 2r; cf. R to Dr David Skene, 13 Jul 1765, NLS MS. THO 2, fo. 3v: "I think the comm(on) people here and in the neighbourhood greatly inferior to the common people with you. They are Bæotian in their Understandings, fanatical in their Religion, and clownish in their dress and Manners. The Clergy encourage this fanaticism too much and find it the onely way to popularity.") Reid's counterpart at Edinburgh College, Adam Ferguson, though a good Christian like Reid, also felt obliged to make certain concessions to Montesquieu in the matter of physical causes. As he wrote in his syllabus from this period, "Some diversities of the race appear to be connected with situation and climate." ([Adam Ferguson], *Analysis of Pneumatics and Moral*

For Reid, the plasticity of human nature — to whatever cause we ascribe it — is more apparent than real, for beneath (perhaps far beneath) the outward expression of compliance lies an inward capacity for freedom. Even so, the danger is great that those subject to despotism may through deprivation “become incapable of Liberty.”<sup>33</sup> What is more, once a sense of liberty is lost so too is the capacity for virtue. A sense of liberty is a necessary precondition for virtue: if one believed that everything were predetermined, one would not be moved to exert oneself in the cause of virtue.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, if a capacity for liberty and virtue are prerequisites for fulfilling one’s moral and intellectual potential and thereby for imitating the perfections of God and securing one’s salvation, it must be true that one naturally loves liberty and virtue. As Reid explained, “There is nothing which men desire more earnestly than independance and it is not to be supposed that any man will subject himself to the will of others and submit his actions to their controul without some urgent cause.”<sup>35</sup> As Reid observed:

This state to men who are trained up with a sense of Liberty would be intollerable, they would rather in habit the wilds of America with the Hurons or Eskimaux than be the slaves of the Great Mogul. But man is a very tractable Animal and can be trained to bear the extremities of want poverty pain hunger cold and even Slavery itself with patience and resignation. ...Lord Molesworth in his Account of Denmark observes very justly that Slavery like a sickly constitution becomes in time habitual so as to be thought no burthen. It mortifies ambition Emulation and other troublesome as well as active qualities which the sense of Liberty produces. And the Slave banishing all thought of the future and reflexion upon the past, sings in his chains like a bird confined to a Cage And makes the best of the present Moment.

Losing the sense of liberty and virtue therefore means losing one’s hope of bettering oneself. It also means losing one’s ability to think about the future and reflect upon the past. Once accustomed to a lack of liberty it becomes possible for one to believe

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*Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1766), p. 10, n. \*. Ferguson had also made certain sceptical concessions to Hume, as we see on p. 16: “The principal articles of relation are those of similitude, contiguity, cause and effect.”)

<sup>33</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2r; cf. *Works*, p. 601a.

<sup>34</sup>Hence Montesquieu’s observation that “When religion establishes the dogma of the necessity of human actions, the penalties of the laws should be more severe and the police more vigilant so that men, who without them would let themselves go, will base their decisions on these other motives; but if the religion establishes the dogma of liberty, it is something else again. From laziness of the soul arises the Mohammedan dogma of predestination, and from this dogma of predestination is born laziness of the soul. One has said, it is decreed by god, so one must rest. In such a case, the laws should arouse men made drowsy by the religion. (Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, p. 468.)

<sup>35</sup>MS. 4/III/10, fo. 1r.



that, far from being a grievous burden, slavery actually makes one happy and that patience and resignation are the highest virtues.<sup>36</sup>

Summing up, Reid observed:

There is not a more mortifying view of human Nature than we are presented with when we reflect that so great a part of the human Race have been for thousands of years held in this dreadful Slavery of Despotick Government. But it would be still more Mortifying to conceive as the Ingenious Montesquieu does that those Climates which Nature has favoured most by a variety of natural Productions for the use of the human Species should by a kind of fatality be necessarily subjected to this kind of Government.<sup>37</sup>

Despotism mortifies our active qualities. Its persistence presents a mortifying view of human nature. Montesquieu's determinism is still more mortifying. Evidently, Reid could not quite believe that man was as tractable as he appeared to be under despotic rule when he considered the fierce sense of freedom man exhibits in his savage state (from which Reid seems to have taken his bearings in these matters). Be that as it may, the outlook for improvement was not very promising. As Reid put it:

Under such Governments people come in some Generations to lose all sense of the Rights and privileges of human Nature & become incapable of Liberty. The ignorance in which they are kept & the slavish doctrines of their Religion prevent any sentiments of liberty from entering into their minds or if they can enter fear and Superstition and that pusillanimity which are their natural Effect immediately stifle every desire of asserting their Liberty.<sup>38</sup>

It must be emphasized that while Reid made an important concession to the sceptics in making this point, he would not allow that our moral sense *itself* was merely the effect of custom and habit, a belief, that is, like any other.

On the other hand, Reid's scepticism did not stop with his concession that it is possible to lose one's sense of proper rights and privileges. As he observed in his lectures, because despotism is "the most simple and inartificial" form of government it "has prevailed among the least enlightened Nations and must always keep those

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<sup>36</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 121. Once again the conjunction of rational-theological ethics with republican politics is evident, for Molesworth was an eminent republican, in whose circle Reid's teacher Turnbull had moved.

<sup>37</sup>MS. 4/III/5, fos 1v-2r.

<sup>38</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2r. In this one can detect an echo of Shaftesbury, who allowed only that where a people are "totally oppress'd, the scatter'd Seeds of Virtue will ... remain alive ... to a second Generation", after which they would be reduced to the "abject and compliant State of long-accustom'd Slaves" (Shaftesbury, *Inquiry*, pp. 38-39).



Nations in Ignorance of the Rights of Mankind And the principles of policy.” Even if those subject to despotic governments could be brought to “believe that they have both the Power and Right in their hands” they might very well continue to submit to their government “1 From Ignorance of the Evils it tends to produce & want of Experience 2 In order to redress greater Evils 3 From the want of a Sense of Liberty 4 From ignorance of any other form of Government.”<sup>39</sup> Reid’s remarks echo a very sceptical sentiment expressed by Montesquieu. If we are so fond of liberty and hate violence so much, the latter asked, how is it that we do not “rise up incessantly against despotic government”? The answer was simple:

In order to form a moderate government, one must combine powers, regulate them, temper them, make them act; one must give one power a ballast, so to speak, to put it in a position to resist another; this is a masterpiece of legislation that chance rarely produces and prudence is rarely allowed to produce. By contrast, a despotic government leaps to view, so to speak; it is uniform throughout; as only passions are needed to establish it, everyone is good enough for that.<sup>40</sup>

Habits of opinion therefore in a decisive respect change human nature, for they disable the active powers that would spur men on to real virtue, and dull the intellectual powers that are necessary to the formation of true opinions.<sup>41</sup> Reid even used the term *second nature* to describe our condition after we have been formed by custom and habit in society.<sup>42</sup> In other words, such is the force of bad habits, bad examples and bad education that the revitalization of our sense of rights is not necessarily sufficient to reawaken our sense of right and wrong or of good and evil and therefore to rejuvenate our sense of liberty. The light of reason having once been dimmed by the overlay of custom and habit, human nature having once been shaped by opinion, it is

<sup>39</sup>MSS. 4/III/5, fo. 2r; 4/III/6, fo. 1r.

<sup>40</sup>For this reason Montesquieu suspected that true “Politics is a dull rasp which by slowly grinding away gains its end” (Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. 63, 243; cf. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1970), p. 128: “Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective”).

<sup>41</sup>In his lectures Reid wrote: “So wonderfull Effects does Education and Custom produse in the minds of men a Tyger and a Lamb are not more contrary in their natures than a Canadian and an Asiatick. You would think it impossible that they could be of the same Species ... So flexible is the human Disposition by Education and Discipline that it may with regard to political Notions be wound up to the highest Spirit of Liberty and Independance, or brought down to the lowest pitch of Servility even to adore the chain that binds it. Nor do we see less flexibility in mens Religious opinions which when formed entirely by Authority and Education may be eith(er) wound up to the most extravagant heights of Enthusiasm or sunk into the most abject Superstition” (MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2r); cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. and ed. by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 45: “habit would have to change nature”.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. *Practical Ethics*, p. 281.

very difficult if not impossible to change the minds of those whose very natures have been so moulded. Human nature, while in principle infinitely malleable, is by no means endlessly changeable within the intellectual career of an individual. In all of this Reid was making important concessions to the sceptics and tacitly criticizing Francis Hutcheson.

Custom and habit change human nature. A more sceptical view could scarcely be imagined. In this connection one thinks of Pascal's scattered remarks in the *Pensées* on the formation of a second nature by means of custom and habituation.<sup>43</sup> It is not difficult to imagine how Reid, armed with this insight, could have conceived that our point of view or opinion must change to agree with changed nature.<sup>44</sup>

Despite his high regard for Montesquieu, Reid was unwilling to endorse the view that it is the eternal fate of those who happen to be born in warm climates to suffer under despotic governments. Moreover, despite his own grim pronouncement on our capacity to lose our natural sense of liberty, Reid apparently believed in the gradual spread of enlightenment, which in this context meant the habit of entertaining sounder notions of liberty. (It must be emphasized that Reid's belief in progress — barely hinted at here in his denial of Montesquieu's determinism and, at any rate, all but taken back in his pessimistic forecast — would become much more pronounced in later years.) But even in this earlier stage Reid conceived of a gradual progress in human affairs which would entail a dispelling of illusion and a lifting of spirits, thus preparing the way for the enjoyment of real liberty and the practice of true virtue.

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<sup>43</sup>Cf. [Blaise] Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. and ed. A.J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 39, 61, 153, 237.

<sup>44</sup>One also recalls the sceptical conversion described by Boswell in his narration of one of his travels: "I entered Rome with full classical enthusiasm, but when I arrived at my inn and found myself surrounded by the landlord, by *valets de place*, by scoundrels, my fantastic sensibility was wounded, and at first I was in a bad humour. I had an odd thought which now makes me laugh heartily. As I was walking along the streets of Rome, which are very little different from those of any other city, I said to myself, 'Was the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans written to the inhabitants of this city? And did I use to be so terrified by it?' At once the Epistle of St. Paul seemed to me to be just an ancient writing by some ecclesiastical zealot. The word of God was no longer in it. Great chemist of human nature! you see how a mind can be changed. Ah, we must analyse with the most delicate nicety" (B to Rousseau, from *Boswell on the Grand Tour* (1953), quoted in Elek, Elek and Johnston, compilers, *Age of the Grand Tour*, p. 96).

When faced with the blatant disregard for human happiness and prosperity entailed by despotism, Reid could not help but criticize this form of government according to a moral standard. Reid made it clear in his lectures that this standard was embodied in “the more mild and Equitable Governments” of Europe which “afford us ... Models from which we can form ... just notions of Political Government” or, in other words, “of the Ends that may be attained by Government from which we must deduce both the rights of civil Governours and the duties of Subjects.” Although exemplified by these “Moderate Governments”, the moral standard by which regimes are judged is actually grounded upon our natural sense of the rights and privileges of human nature and upon naturally occurring sentiments of liberty.<sup>45</sup> Under these circumstances, we might ask why Reid did not simply install these natural instincts in his list of the first principles of political reasoning. But the answer is clear: custom and habit may so restructure human nature as to deaden our instincts, in which case how we commonly act will be at variance with how we ought to act.

Reid was unwilling to reduce his account of political phenomena to a discussion of efficiency; he endeavoured instead to evaluate the tendency of a given regime to produce justice. This aspect of political jurisprudence was in some tension with his political science, which required a greater degree of ironic detachment. The parallel concerns of the republican ideologist (liberty and virtue) and of the theological moralist (free will — or power — and accountability) overrode the agenda he shared with Hume to create an independent political science.

The emphasis of Reid’s political jurisprudence recalls Harrington’s Ciceronian–cum–Aristotelian account of the principles of government in the *Oceana*. Harrington’s treatment of power and authority in the Preliminaries to the *Oceana* resonate in the account of power and virtue which Reid sketched out in his inaugural address, and which he developed in his lectures. Invoking a familiar Ciceronian formula, Harrington suggested that power derived from “the goods of fortune,” i.e. beauty, health, riches and strength, while authority was founded on “the goods of the mind”, e.g. courage, prudence and wisdom. Thus a “learned writer may have authority, though he have no power; and a foolish magistrate may have power, though he have otherwise no esteem or authority.” In *Oceana*, power was combined with authority according to “ancient prudence”, i.e. the “art whereby a civil society of men is instituted and preserved upon the foundation of common right or interest” so that it is

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<sup>45</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo 2r–v.

an "empire of laws and not of men." Ancient prudence was to be distinguished from its modern counterpart, according to which "some man, or some few men, subject a city or a nation, and rule it according unto his or their private interest; which, because the laws in such cases are made according to the interest of a man or of some few families, may be said to be the empire of men and not of laws." Because the common right on which a government of laws is founded is identical to "right reason", ancient prudence required that these laws be the embodiment of reason, i.e. "reason ... brought forth by ... will into action," or, in other words, the incarnation of liberty and virtue itself.<sup>46</sup>

Reid's own formula followed easily from Harrington's. In order for a government to be "consistent with the rights of Mankind and the ends of Government" it must fulfil two conditions. First, it must be a "Government of Laws and not of Men." This is essential because "Man is a being compounded of Reason and Passion, and in most men the last principle is often prevalent over the first", so that impartiality, for example, cannot be guaranteed in a government of men. On the other hand, "Law is Reason without Passion" and is therefore a safeguard against "partial favour". (Despotism clearly fails to meet this requirement.) Secondly, these laws must be "framed and directed with a view to the good & happiness of the Subject." Reid maintained that "no form of Government can be reconciled to the principles of sound Morals in which the people or such a representative of the people as cannot have a different Interest from the whole have not the Legislative power or such a share of it as that they may not be subjected to laws that are grievous to them without their consent." Thus, according to Reid,

Every Government therefore which is not directed to promote the good of the Governed is a Usurpation without Right nor can any Length of Time give it a just Title. The people may be subject through fear or through ignorance. But if they are sufficiently enlightened to understand the Rights that belong to them as men, And if at the same time they have it in their power to shake it off and to establish a better and more equitable Government, I have no doubt but they have as good Right to do it as a man has to defend himself against a highwayman. They need not search into ancient Records or Usages to prove their Right to be free and happy. Every man is born with this Right and if all his ancestors from Adam had agreed to deprive him of this Right, this cannot weaken it.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 161, 163, 169; see also p. 165.

<sup>47</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fos 1r-2r.

## Chapter 11

### Enforcing Morals and Restricting Property

In this chapter I will examine Reid's account of the fundamental principles by which morality can be enforced and property restricted. These principles were conscience and the common good. Reid's account of conscience owed something to Smith, but his insistence on the enforceability of imperfect as well as perfect rights as essential to the realization of the common good (which he identified as the end of government) distinguished him from both Hume and Smith. For Reid, the jurisdiction of the State went far beyond the enforcement of mere justice.

1.

As I have discussed, Reid suggested that the moral standard against which all forms of government were to be judged was embodied in the mild and equitable governments of Europe. These were models on which one could form just notions of government (i.e. of the good ends that may be attained by it) and from which one could deduce the rights of governors and the duties of subjects. Yet Reid's notion of politics as the art of modelling political societies so as to answer the end proposed by them did not relate only to experience, for in his view the origin of the rights and duties that are enshrined in moderate governments lay in the moral faculty or in right reason. As Reid expressed it: "every Man has within him a touchstone of Morals, the dictates of his own Conscience which approves of what is Right and condemns what is wrong, when it is fairly represented and considered without prejudice." Or, as he also put it, by our conscience or right reason we have an "immediate perception of Right and wrong of Moral Rectitude & Depravity in moral Agents". Smith had considered it as "altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason"; these perceptions had to be historically cultivated. For Reid, however, our duties were derived from our immediately felt sentiments. Thus our duties to God "must be grounded upon just sentiments of him". This made it incumbent on us to "endeavour by the best use of our Reason to attain just Notions of him". In the same manner, our natural rights, including our political rights, had to be "founded upon Natural Reason and Equity, and not barely upon positive institution and Compact". This made it our duty to "consult [our] inward Monitor in [our] calm



and serious moments” and thus to judge rightly of where our duties lie. According to Reid, this monitor which God “hath planted in every mans breast distinguishes right conduct from wrong in most instances no less immediately, no less clearly and certainly than the taste discerns sweet from bitter.” As Reid observed: our natural rights bear the “Same Relation to our moral faculty as the legal or civil Rights of men have to the law of the Land. Every mans Conscience is a law to him. It enjoyns certain actions & forbids others[;] it prescribes to him a certain rule of conduct and as far as he deviates from this Rule, so far is he guilty in his own Judgment and in the Judgment of others.” At this point Reid took the opportunity to reply to sceptical humanists like Montaigne who were critical of attempts to elevate existing legal codes to the status of natural law:

It is easy to see how ... those ... who made the Laws their Study would be led to form a Notion of a Natural Law and Natural Rights of Men which were not grounded upon the Code or Pandects but in the human Nature and in that faculty by which we discern Right from Wrong.

Conscience having dictated where our duty lies and discovered of what our rights consist, the object of politics as the art of modelling is clear:

The end of all Constitutions of Government of all Civil Laws and of all Civil Judicatories is to preserve & support the Rights of Mankind. And this is the proper Test or Touchstone by which Forms of Government & of Civil Judicatories and Systems of civil Laws are to be tried and Judged, Namely, if such Forms or such Systems are agreeable to the Rights of Mankind and conducive to the preservation of them, that is if they are founded upon the Law of Nature, they are good, otherwise they are bad and ought to be corrected.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 110–111, 113, [117], 143, 144, 145, 179; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1976), p. 320; cf. *Works*, p. 599b. When understood this way rather than in non-judgemental Montesquieuian terms, Reid’s notion of the “political art” recalls a formula of Turnbull’s. Reid’s teacher had distinguished two questions in politics, the prudential (rightly understood) question of “‘what ends right reason dictates to mankind as the ends to be proposed in constituting civil government; and what means, i.e. what orders and constitutions it points out as the proper means in order to attain these good ends’” and the empirical question of “‘how in fact various governments were formed, and how, being formed, they changed gradually their frame to the better or worse.’” Turnbull’s first question answers to Reid’s exhortation to consult conscience; the second underlines the notion that the principal purpose of modelling is to reform or improve existing political constitutions. (George Turnbull, *Remarks on Jo[hann] Got[tlieb] Heineccius, A Methodical System of Universal Law*, trans. Turnbull, 2 vols (London, 1743), vol. 2, pp. 110–111.)

Interestingly enough, Reid couched his discussion of the dictates of our moral faculty or conscience within the highly Smithian notion of the approval of a “candid Spectator”.<sup>2</sup> But it must also be emphasized that even where Reid employed the Smithian language of the “witness in [the] ... breast”, he was sharply critical of Smith’s exclusion of God from his explanation of conscience. Reid insisted that God, not the witness in the breast, was the “fountain of true Honour & the sole infallible Judge of Worth”. Unlike Smith, he did not take his starting-point in our “fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others” but in the existence of a “Supreme Being[, a] ... compassionate Father and faithfull Guardian, whose goodness sympathizes with us even in the afflictions and trials which his wisdom sees necessary for our discipline and culture”. Our duties to God (i.e. seeking his approval) and to ourselves (i.e. earning the approbation of our own conscience) outweigh our “Duty to gain & to preserve the good Opinion of others by all fair and Laudable means, and to avoid what may lessen [our] Reputation with them.” Smith, it must be underlined, had suggested that we “must ... in all ... cases ... view ourselves not so much according to that light in which we may naturally appear to ourselves, as according to that in which we naturally appear to others.”<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding Reid’s differences with Smith on these points, he employed Smith’s language of changing places with others in our imagination both in Aberdeen and in Glasgow. Thus in what is probably his abstract of Wise Club question 35, “How far it is allowable to principle Children with Opinions before they are capable of a Rational Enquiry into them”, which was handled on 1 April 1760, he wrote:

One method of preventing [the] undue influence of the Passions on our Opinions is to imagine a Change of persons and put ourselves in the place of another. The Rule of our Saviour [is] admirable to this purpose what soever you would that others should do unto you &c”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 149. Reid probably went along with the Butlerian concept of conscience as a faculty as this appeared in the first edition of Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Reid would not be so much in sympathy with Smith’s later views of the conscience, for in the process of developing his concept of the impartial spectator in the second and sixth editions of the *Theory*, Smith came to portray the conscience more as a social construct than as a Butlerian faculty.

<sup>3</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 118, 119, 135, 153; Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Raphael and Macfie, pp. 10, 83; see also D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, Introduction to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 15, 37. For Reid’s criticisms of Smith’s concept of the impartial spectator, see MS. 2131/7/V/7, quoted in David Fate Norton and J.C. Stewart-Robertson, “Thomas Reid on Adam Smith’s Theory of Morals,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 41, no. 3 (Jul.–Sept. 1980), pp. 395–396; Thomas Reid, “A Sketch of Dr Smith’s Theory of Morals,” in J.C. Stewart-Robertson and David Fate Norton, “Thomas Reid on Adam Smith’s Theory of Morals,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1984), pp. 311, 317.

<sup>4</sup>MS. 2/11/1, fo. 2r.

Reid was expressly critical of the grounds on which Smith distinguished perfect and imperfect rights in his first set of lectures on jurisprudence at Glasgow College. In an incomplete set of notes from Reid's lectures found among Archibald Arthur's papers<sup>5</sup> the view is expressed that

In general the perfect & imperfect rights of men cannot be better exprest then our Saviour's precept Do to others as you would be done to. This is an appeal to our own faculty. Not what we would desire from inordinate self-love a miser would wish to have his neighbour's esta⟨te⟩ this is not the precept, but what we ought to expect or ought to do. When we place ourselves in the place of the person benefited this takes away all prejudice.

Our Moral faculty determines what we app⟨rove⟩ ordin⟨arily⟩

As Judgment is compared often to a ballance so may this. I am in the one Scale my neighbour in the other. In order to detect this ballance if false it is right to change weights I put myself in your ballance & you in mine. There cannot be a better way of seeing our obligation to our duty than conceiving that we should do to othe⟨rs⟩ what we expect from them. We may easily judge from this rule what is our duty to our fellow Creatures. We will always judge according to equity & any faults we may fall into will not be imputed by God. We naturally judge by this rule in our Claims on others we desire them to put themselves in our place nothing more moves us. This rule contains both the perfect & imperfect rights. The first is only a negative virtue, the other contains all doing good.<sup>6</sup>

Here lies the connection between carrying out our duties (whether of justice or of humanity) and exerting our power, for we are called upon to be "injurious to no man to be just to all and usefull to [our] country according to [our] power."<sup>7</sup> In theory at

<sup>5</sup>I discovered these notes at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. See Appendix 2, item 2.

<sup>6</sup>ML MS. 891086, fos 2r–3r, 4r–5v of loose, uncatalogued booklet. These extracts are important because they flesh out and fill in a gap in the lecture notes that have survived in Reid's own hand (see *Practical Ethics*, pp. 147–148). In so reading Reid as intending that both perfect and imperfect rights are expressed by the golden rule I differ from Knud Haakonssen's interpretation of this passage (see Commentary on *Practical Ethics*, p. 322, n. 27). This is an example of how the student notes may be helpful in solving interpretative puzzles in Reid's own notes. Reid underlined this point in the *Active Powers*: "[the golden rule] comprehends every rule of justice without exception. It comprehends all the relative duties, arising either from the more permanent relations of parent and child, of master and servant, of magistrate and subject, of husband and wife, or from the more transient relations of rich and poor, of buyer and seller, of debtor and creditor, of benefactor and beneficiary, of friend and enemy. It comprehends every duty of charity and humanity, and even of courtesy and good manners. Nay, I think, that, without any force or straining, it extends even to the duties of self-government. For, as every man approves in others the virtues of prudence, temperance, self-command, and fortitude, he must perceive that what is right in others must be right in himself in like circumstances" (*Works*, p. 639a–b).

<sup>7</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 129. Reid recast this formula in the *Active Powers*: "When we employ our power to promote the good and happiness of others, this is a benefit or favour; when we employ it to hurt them, it is an injury. Justice fills up the middle between these two. It is such a conduct as does no injury to others; but it does not imply the doing them any favour" (*Works*, p. 654b).



least this poses no problem, for we may be assured that “as these are the Worthiest & Noblest Ends a Man can pursue so they are most in our Power.”

One final point must be underlined in this connection. Despite the lip-service Smith paid to the faculty of conscience in the first edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), the evolutionary concept of conscience he was to develop in subsequent editions was already lurking beneath the surface in the 1759 edition. Smith expressed this evolutionary concept in terms of the relationship between laws and manners:

In some countries, the rudeness and barbarism of the people hinder the natural sentiments of justice from arriving at that accuracy and precision which, in more civilized nations, they naturally attain to. Their laws are like their manners gross and rude and undistinguishing. In other countries the unfortunate constitution of their courts of judicature hinders any regular system of jurisprudence from ever establishing itself among them, tho’ the improved manners of the people may be such as would admit of the most accurate.<sup>8</sup>

Given Reid’s concessions to the theorists of manners on the question of the influence of custom and habit on our sense of rights and liberties, he probably would have had some sympathy with Smith’s views on this point, although clearly he would have resisted a full-blown evolutionary theory of conscience. Thus in his lectures on private jurisprudence he suggested that “nations tho extreamly rude and unimproved are conscious of their obligation to deal fairly & honestly by one another and act accordingly.” Reid regarded fair dealing as among our natural rights and counted it among the virtues that could survive even under the denaturing pressures of despotic government. This point, which clearly had implications for Reid’s assessment of Smith, was in fact aimed directly against Hume’s view that the obligation of contracts was artificial in nature. I shall return to this point.<sup>9</sup>

Although Reid’s use of the Smithian device of an imaginary change of persons to counteract the influence of the passions in shaping our opinions did not involve a “cool consideration of its distant consequences upon the good of society” (for Reid such a calculation was “confined to the higher ranks, who, by their education or by their office, are led to make the public good an object”) it still required an act of judgement. As Reid put it: the golden rule would lead one “to the knowledge of every branch of justice, without the consideration of public good, or of laws and statutes

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<sup>8</sup>Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1759), pp. 548–549.

<sup>9</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 157, 193; cf. MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1v.

made to promote it.”<sup>10</sup> In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* Smith had distinguished between perfect and imperfect rights. Perfect rights were those which corresponded to the duties of justice and whose legal enforcement was absolutely essential to the existence of society. Imperfect rights corresponded to the duties of humanity or beneficence; their enforcement or encouragement was important but not crucial to the maintenance of society. As Smith put it, even if there were no “mutual love and affection” among the members of a given society that “society, tho’ less happy and agreeable, will not necessarily be dissolved”, for it was possible for a society to “subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility ... [for] ... tho’ no one man in it should owe any obligation, or be bound in gratitude to any other, it may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation.” On the other hand, were people “at all times ready to hurt and injure one another”, no society could subsist among them, for the “moment that injury begins, the moment that mutual resentment and animosity take place, all the bands of it are broke asunder, and the different members of which it consisted are, as it were, dissipated and scattered abroad by the violence and opposition of their discordant affections.” On the basis of these observations, Smith concluded that “Beneficence ... [was] less essential to the existence of society than justice.” It was to be regarded as the “ornament which embellish[ed]” rather than the “foundation which support[ed]” the great edifice of human society. This foundation was justice.

For all that, justice remained for Smith a “Mere ... negative virtue ... [which] only hinder[ed] us from hurting our neighbour” and earned us “very little positive merit.” The greatest exertions of beneficence, by contrast, “deserv[ed] the highest reward.” On the other hand, the “meer want of beneficence ... merit[ed] no punishment from equals”. In his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith suggested that our perfect rights corresponded to the negative virtue of justice, whereas our imperfect rights answered to the positive virtue of beneficence. The former are those which we have a “title to demand and if refused to compel an other to perform”, while the latter “correspond[ed] to those duties which ought to be performed to us by others but which we have no title to compel them to perform”. Perfect rights were, properly speaking, the only rights that belonged to jurisprudence; imperfect rights, Smith is reported to have said, belonged rather to a “system of moralls as they do not fall under the jurisdiction of the laws.” As Haakonssen has shown, the distinction between perfect and imperfect

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<sup>10</sup>*Works*, pp. 653a, b; 661b; cf. p. 639b.



rights underlined the priority of the negative virtue of justice over the positive virtue of beneficence in point of “moral urgency”.

Despite his apparently rigid separation of the claims of justice and beneficence, Smith did mix law with morals when he advocated that the provision of a minimal education be enshrined in law, presumably on the basis that not to do so would be tantamount to an “infringement of the liberty of the child and/or parent”. With regard to Smith’s apparent collapsing of the distinction between justice and beneficence (or perfect and imperfect rights) on this point, Haakonssen has shrewdly commented that even if this were true, the utility at stake was “rather negatively defined: Smith [was] not concerned with any positive standard of education, but only with preventing men from becoming ‘mutilated and deformed’ in ‘the proper use of the intellectual faculties’.” Be that as it may, Smith did allow that a

superior may, ... sometimes ... with universal approbation, oblige those under his jurisdiction to behave ... with a certain degree of propriety to one another. The laws of all civilized nations oblige parents to maintain their children, and children to maintain their parents, and impose upon men many other duties of beneficence. The civil magistrate is entrusted with the power not only of preserving the public peace by restraining injustice, but of promoting the prosperity of the commonwealth, by establishing good discipline, and by discouraging every sort of vice and impropriety; he may prescribe rules, therefore, which not only prohibit mutual injuries among fellow-citizens, but command mutual good offices to a certain degree ... . Of all the duties of a law-giver, however, this, perhaps, is that which it requires the greatest delicacy and reserve to execute with propriety and judgment. To neglect it altogether exposes the commonwealth to many gross disorders and shocking enormities, and to push it too far is destructive of all liberty, security, and justice.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously, much depends on the interpretative weight assigned to this passage as against that given to passages in which Smith asserted the primacy of justice over beneficence and dismissed the latter as belonging to morals. Haakonssen evidently places greater importance on the passages in which Smith excluded the duties of humanity from the discussion of natural jurisprudence. He emphasizes that Reid, for his part, was sharply critical of Smith’s belief that imperfect rights and the duties of

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*: Report of 1762–3, in Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael, and P.G. Stein, eds (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1978), p. 9; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1759), pp. 177–178, 179, 189–191; Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 137; Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner; text ed. W.B. Todd (Oxford, 1976), v, i, f. 61, quoted in Knud Haakonssen, *Science of a Legislator*, p. 122; Knud Haakonssen, *Science of a Legislator*, p. 102; cf. pp. 92, 94, 97, 131.

charity and humanity did not belong to the discussion of natural jurisprudence and of his insistence that these duties “cannot be enforced by human laws, but must be left to the judgment and conscience of men, free from compulsion.” In his Glasgow lectures Reid praised the “authors of greatest Reputation,” i.e. Grotius, Pufendorf, Barbeyrac and Hutcheson for having included the duties of charity and humanity in their “Systems” and declared that our performance of such duties “tend[s] equally to the happiness and perfection of our own Nature and to the benefite of human Society.” Reid believed that the possession of only those “virtues which regard ... the perfect Rights of Mankind constitute but a very imperfect Character”; by contrast, an “attention to ... the imperfect rights of Mankind constitutes the perfection of Virtue.” A person who performs only the negative duty of causing his neighbour no harm

may be very far from discharging the duty incumbent upon him as a Member of Human Society. As a withered Arm or hand is to the natural Body an Useless incumbrance, so that the body would be as well or better without it: In like Manner a Person who is in no way subservient to the good of the Political Body, is onely a dead weight upon it. it receives no benefite from him, it would be at no loss if he were extinct.<sup>12</sup>

More to the point, Reid asserted that such a person “deserves punishment for every ... transgression of the Law of his mind”, which encompasses the duties of charity and humanity. On the other hand, when a person cannot even refrain from injuring others, Reid wrote in versions of his lectures on politics after 1764–1765, “[he] is no longer fit for Society ... [and] is justly cut off as a rotten member by capital Punishment for the terror of others.”<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, in dealing with those who are disposed to misuse their freedom, Reid recommended that “That degree of Liberty which men will abuse to their own hurt and that of others ought to be taken from them” and maintained that this policy would be “for their own good & necessary for the safety of others”. Reid was, however, also quick to add that “Good Men ought to have liberty”, observing that “they are entitled to it and will make a good Use of it.” Reid arrived at this far-reaching normative conclusion by making the general observation that “The more a people are corrupted in their Morals the less they are capable of freedom.”

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<sup>12</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. [138]–139, 145; see also Knud Haakonssen, “Reid’s Politics: A Natural Law Theory,” *Reid Studies* no. 1 (1986–1987), p. [10].

<sup>13</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 5v; cf. MS. 4/III/2, fo. 1v: “When such Characters appear in Society they must either be confined as wild beasts for the common Safety, or they must be delivered over to publick Justice for the terror of others & cut off from the political Body as rotten members.”

It is apparent, therefore, that for Reid governments may legally enforce at least some of the duties of humanity as well as those of justice. His lectures on the rights and duties of states make evident his belief that the “civil Power may punish Men for immoralities in Selfgovernment where no injury is done to [their] neighbour”. As he wrote,

Whatever impairs the Morals, enervates the mindes, or bodies of the Members of a State is hurtfull to the State and as every individual so every political Body has right and is obliged to use its endeavours to preserve all its Members in that Sound State which fits them for being most usefull to the Society.

[It is also t]he duty of a State to promote Industry Agriculture Arts and Science. To provide for the Necessities of the Poor. to Punish idleness Riot and Dissipation. To manage the Publick Revenue to provide Ships & Harbours and all the Implements of forreign Trade to drain Marches make highways Bridges Canals Fortresses. To polish the Manners as well as preserve the Morals of its Subjects. To maintain the Respect due to Magistrates Parents Seniors persons of Superior Rank.<sup>14</sup>

Given Reid’s emphasis on the duties of humanity in addition to those of justice, his belief in the necessity of moral and religious instruction and ultimately in the need for an established religion follow readily. As Reid wrote:

The exercises of a rational Piety and Devotion have a manifest & powerfull tendency in their very Nature to strengthen every virtuous principle to confirm every good purpose, to fortify the Mind against every temptation, to raise it in adversity, to temper the giddiness of prosperity and to enlarge our hearts in Sentiments of humanity & kind affection towards the whole creation of God.<sup>15</sup>

The moral urgency of religious exercise is clear: the enlargement of our hearts is precisely what enables us to recognize our wider responsibilities, for it opens the eye of conscience. Hence the importance of parental authority, which is intended to supervise the slow progress of that act of opening.

In his Glasgow lectures Reid suggested that in practice it is “very difficult to ascertain the precise limit between [perfect and imperfect rights].” He elaborated on this in print: “Like the colours in a prismatic image, they run into each other, so that the best

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<sup>14</sup>MS. 7/VII/23, fo. 1v; cf. *Practical Ethics*, pp. 187, 234. Reid underlined this point in the *Active Powers* (1788): “As wise legislators and magistrates ought to have it as their end to make the citizens good as well as just, we find, in all civilized nations, laws that are intended to encourage the duties of humanity. Where human laws cannot enforce them by punishments, they may encourage them by rewards. Of this the wisest legislators have given examples; and how far this branch of legislation may be carried, no man can foresee” (*Works*, p. 645b).

<sup>15</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 124.

eye cannot fix the precise boundary between them.”<sup>16</sup> Smith was sceptical of our ability to recognize imperfect duties and therefore fearful of the consequences of trying to enforce them. He acknowledged the importance of observing duties of humanity to the well-being of the State, yet he favoured sociocultural forms of reinforcement, i.e. an educational rather than a legal approach.<sup>17</sup> Reid, to repeat, was untroubled by the scepticism of Smith; for him, our oracular moral faculty or conscience provided a ready solution to the epistemological problem of recognizing imperfect duties, and no one could long condemn an honest mistake of policy in this regard. He suggested that the “universal ... Consent of Mankind with regard to the main points of right and wrong of virtue and vice ought to satisfy the most sceptical not onely of the reality of the distinction between the one and the other, but also that the Almighty has taken care of the Constitution of our Nature, to make this distinction so apparent and obvious that it requires no deep enquiry or laborious reasoning to discover it.”<sup>18</sup>

While Smith was the immediate target of Reid’s arguments in this area, it must be emphasized that his criticisms apply equally well against Hume. Moreover, while Reid adopted the Smithian device of an imaginary change of persons to rid ourselves of the prejudices that prevent us from perceiving where our duties lie (in other words to open our hearts and minds to the dictates of conscience), he did not believe that our moral faculty was *constituted* by this change of persons; the dictates of conscience were themselves grounded on the common good. As Reid put it: the “Right of Punishment of crimes that do not directly injure us but are of bad Example & hurtfull to Human Society [are] grounded upon this that every man ought to do his utmost to promote the common Good of the human kind.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, while Reid did not believe that this principle was accessible to any but the “higher ranks,” he did believe that the voice of conscience which is audible to “all men that are not greatly corrupted” proclaimed not only acts of injustice but also those of inhumanity to be “base, unworthy, and deserving of punishment.”<sup>20</sup> It was presumably the voice of conscience which authorized people to “Unite ... under Government[s] in order to carry on some common Interest or End”.<sup>21</sup> Hume, it will be recalled, had tacitly

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<sup>16</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 203; *Works*, p. 645b.

<sup>17</sup>See Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, pp. 62–63.

<sup>18</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 179; cf. *Works*, p. 642b. In hard cases (i.e. where it is difficult to determine where our duty lies), Reid allowed that a “man may often prescribe Rules to himself, which he ought not to prescribe nor has any tittle to prescribe to another” (*Practical Ethics*, p. [140]).

<sup>19</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup>*Works*, p. 653b.

<sup>21</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 195; cf. pp. 180, 245.

denied the voice of conscience in basing our sympathy with public utility on our opinion of interest, i.e. the *utile* (prudent). Reid's remarks in the *Active Powers* make it clear that for him conscience was equivalent to the *honestum* (honest) and it was his belief in an honesty distinct from prudence and pleasure that separated him from Hume on this point.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.

Reid's concept of the common good had far-reaching consequences for his account of property, which was also couched in the Smithian language of the approval of a "candid Spectator", a term he used interchangeably with "moral faculty".<sup>23</sup> Because the "Law of Nature ... Justifies & guards Property onely as far as it conduces to publick Utility" the right of occupation "must be limited and restrained as the common good requires." Thus by the "Law of Nature & Right Reason occupation ... onely founds a valid Right when it is made without any injurious intention towards our fellow men and when in reality it neither hurts them nor deprives them of any advantage ease or Security which they formerly enjoyed."<sup>24</sup> This proviso bears a marked similarity to Locke's doctrine in his "Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government" (the *Second Treatise*) that a man makes his property that which nature placed in a "common state" by "mix[ing] his Labour with it". By these means he may exclude the "common right of other Men" provided that there is "enough ... and as good left in common for others."<sup>25</sup> As Haakonssen has pointed out, there is also a Lockean resonance in Reid's suggestion that only those things that are for "present Use & Consumption" may become private property, while those that are of a "permanent Nature & [which] are used without being consumed" must be "left in the Community of Nature or at least remain in a State of positive Communion".<sup>26</sup> As James Tully has shown, in the *Two Treatises* Locke "provide[d] a justification ... of the English Common", which is a "positive community," i.e. one in which the individual can acquire a share of what "belong[s] to everyone in

<sup>22</sup>Cf. *Works*, pp. 582b; 587b; 588a–b; 589b; 651a–b; 653a–654a; 656a; 662b.

<sup>23</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 149.

<sup>24</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 148–149; cf. pp. [204]–205, 206.

<sup>25</sup>[John Locke], *Two Treatises of Government* (London, 1690), pp. 245–246; cf. p. 255.

<sup>26</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 210; cf. Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, pp. 64 and n. 80; 325, n. 31.



common". This state is to be distinguished from that of negative community, in which one can acquire a real property in what is "equally open to occupation by everyone."

While it is not clear whether Reid actually subscribed to Locke's view that private property in land is illegitimate, he clearly did believe that private property can only be legitimate where it positively contributes to the common good, i.e. the realization of our moral potential.<sup>27</sup> When Reid's successor at King's, William Ogilvie, published his *Essay on the Right of Property in Land* (1781 or 1782) Reid approved of the latter's utopian scheme to "increase the number of landholders by advancing farmers to that more independent situation". Although they appear to have subscribed wholeheartedly to the negative-community construct, Reid and Ogilvie could not in the final analysis accept this view with regard to the acquisition of property in land. Ogilvie, like Reid, supposed that, fundamentally, God gave the earth to mankind in "common occupancy" (positive community), with the result that each individual "seems to have by nature a right to possess and cultivate an equal share." Unlike Reid, however, Ogilvie regarded Locke as an apologist for the acquisition of property from an initial state of negative communion. In his interpretation of Locke, he laid great stress on the following passage, which he took to be a justification of private property in land based on the right which labour gives: "God gave the earth in common to all men, but since He gave it for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed that He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it for the use of the industrious and rational; and labour was to be his title to it." Ogilvie's own view was that a "right founded in labour cannot supersede [the] natural right of occupancy," which is founded on the "genuine principles of public good and natural right". Indeed, the right of every man to an "equal share of the soil ... in its original state" was for this reason to be esteemed a "maxim of natural law." Ogilvie acknowledged that labour did give a right as well, but not to the land whose fertility is increased thereby, but only to the "additional produce of that fertility, or to the value of it, and [to the] ... transmi[ssion] of] this right to other men." Balancing the "original right of equal property in land" with the right deriving from labour was the object of Ogilvie's scheme for agrarian reform.<sup>28</sup> Reid expressed his approval of his friend's utopian scheme in the following terms:

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>28</sup>Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Hollis, quoted in William Ogilvie, *An Essay on the Right of Property in Land*, in D.C. MacDonald, ed., *Birthright in Land* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench,

James Tully, *A Discourse on Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 127, 128, 130.

Men seem by degrees to improve in the notion of liberty, and I hope likewise will in that of property. But though this earthly globe should be monopolised by a few to the exclusion of others, I hope the intellectual Globe will always be common, and that those who possess the largest share will be still ready to impart to such as are willing to improve it.<sup>29</sup>

Tying the right to property back to human nature, Reid wrote: "A man is capable of acquiring property because Nature has endowed him with such a measure of Judgment and Understanding as that he may make a good use of it." The hope of acquiring property is the "most powerfull spur to Diligence & patience" and "serves to give exercise to many of the Noblest Social Virtues. Liberality friendship Natural Affection." In the *Active Powers* Reid underlined his view that a central purpose of acquiring permanent property or riches is to enlarge our sphere of power by enabling us to "requite [our] benefactors, to relieve objects of compassion ... [and] to make friends". And part of Reid's approval of Ogilvie's utopian scheme must have derived from the "active progressive industry" and incitement to "diligence" that lay at the heart of the latter's scheme.

Reid believed that a "Man or a Nation may be hindred from acquiring such an extent of Property as endangers the Safety and Liberty of others", for

If one Man had the sole Property of any of the Necessaries of Life, & power to defend that Property he might make all others give him what he pleased to demand, that is he might make them his Servants. Thus Pharaoh by monopolizing the Corn of Egypt became proprietor of all Egypt.

Indeed, Reid believed that monopolies that were "oppressive" in any way should be "prevented or punished."<sup>30</sup>

He also suggested that "Restraints may be laid upon the disposal of Property by will or by Entails." The Scottish Law of Entail was a contentious subject in the 1760s. In a very Harringtonian passage Reid observed that great estates had initially been given as a reward for heroic virtue. While such estates remained intact, they reflected honour upon the descendants of heroes and statesmen. But "by the gradual Change of

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Trübner & Co., Ltd.), p. 9, n. \*; Ogilvie, *Essay*, in MacDonald, ed., *Birthright*, pp. 4,5, [7], 10, 11, 12; cf. pp. 9, 13.

<sup>29</sup>R to Ogilvie, 7 Apr 1789, in MacDonald, *Biographical Notes to MacDonald*, ed., *Birthright*, pp. 151–152.

<sup>30</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 151, 164, 207, 210; *Works*, p. 658b; Ogilvie, *Essay*, in MacDonald, ed., *Birthright*, p. 17, n. [\*]; cf. *Practical Ethics*, p. 148; MS. 4/III/15, fo. 1v.

Manners" associated with the introduction of money, landholders had begun to squander their fortunes on luxuries, thus sinking the reputation of their families. The law of entail was hit upon as a means of preserving the great estates and ensuring that the families to whom they belonged continued to bask in the glory of their illustrious ancestors. But while this law was essentially conceived as a way of stretching out the reward of virtue, it unfortunately ended up promoting all manner of vices. First, instead of encouraging industry and virtue in those who were due to inherit an estate, it increased in them the temptation to sloth and vice. In a passage resonant with his inaugural message about power and virtue Reid wrote:

Every human Institution is unfavourable to Virtue & Industry which provides other Roads to Riches and honour than this [i.e. virtue and industry] which Nature has appointed. Entails, therefore seem to have a natural Influence to take away the incitements to Virtue and Industry in a family, in the same degree as they secure Riches to every Heir of Entail without those Qualities which only can enable a man to make a proper use of them.

A second ill effect of entailment is that it tends to weaken parental authority, "which Nature has ordained for the benefite of Children and for the Punishment of those who are incorrigibly vicious." Finally, entailment tends to discourage trade, not only because it decreases credit but also because it keeps entailed estates from becoming "Subjects of Commerce," in other words off the market, and thereby "Preclude[s] those who have made fortunes by their Industry from the great end they have in View in all their Labours, And tend to lead us back to that Gothick Constitution wherein Merchants Manufacturers & Farmers were the Slaves of the Land holders." In time, prosperous traders, frustrated by the short supply of purchaseable land, will seek greener pastures elsewhere.

Reid's objection to entailment was both philosophical and ideological. It was philosophical in the sense that the decision to entail in perpetuity is contrary to reason and philosophy, which can only justify a bequest to a living heir whose virtues are known.<sup>31</sup> The ideological content of this passage is indicated by Reid's concern with the familiar republican themes of liberty and virtue.

What Haakonssen has identified as Reid's wariness of the emerging commercial society comes to sight in a further limitation imposed by the common good on the right of property. As Reid wrote, "A Proprietor has no Right to destroy his Property when

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<sup>31</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 150–152; see also p. 214.

the common Good requires that [it] should be preserved, not to keep up Mercatable Commodities when the common Good requires that they should be brought to Market.”<sup>32</sup>

Reid also made the Harringtonian suggestion that “The State for its own Security and to preserve the Constitution may set Bounds to the Acquisition of Property by Agrarian Laws or other Means of that kind.” In this Reid echoed Hutcheson, who had remarked that ““some publick interests of societies may justify such Agrarian Laws as put a stop to the immoderate acquisitions of private citizens which may prove dangerous to the state’.”<sup>33</sup> In his *Commonwealth of Oceana* Harrington observed that the balance of power in a state follows the balance of property in land. Reid regarded this as “one of the most important discoveries in the Science of Politicks, the honour of which is entirely due to him.” The duration of a government, whether monarchical, aristocratic or popular requires agrarian laws to fix the balance of property in land. The agrarian law upon which that “Grand Machine”, a commonwealth, is established preserves this balance “by such a distribution that no one man or number of men within the compass of the few or aristocracy can come to overpower the whole people by their possessions in lands.” Reid doubted whether even Harrington’s agrarian law “be a Sufficient Security against an undue Accumulation of wealth in the hands of one or a few, and a sufficient security for that Equality among the Citizens which a Republick seems to require.” As Harrington acknowledged that “governments ... which are said to subsist by confusion” may be exceptions to the “general rule” that the balance of power in a state follows the balance of property in land, for in these cases to “fix the balance is to entail misery”, so Reid argued “there may possibly be others which he did not discover”. Thus Reid continued

There are some Species of Property now known in Britain which are not restrained by Harringtons Agrarian, whereby men may accumulate very great Estates unsuitable to the Nature of a Republican Government.

The publick funds amount to 130,000,000 £ Estates in the Colonies.

Presumably what Reid had in mind was the mortgaging of the revenue, which “Creates a Moneyd Interest.”<sup>34</sup> Reid’s critique of Harrington’s agrarian law thus went

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<sup>32</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 207; cf. Haakonssen, Introduction to *Practical Ethics*, p. 65, n. 82.

<sup>33</sup>Hutcheson, *System*, vol. 1, p. 327, quoted in Haakonssen, Commentary on *Practical Ethics*, p. 382, n. 31.

<sup>34</sup>MSS. 4/III/6, fo. 4r-v; 4/III/7, fo. 1v; 4/III/11, fo. 2v; James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 164, 181; cf. p. 333.



beyond Hume, who merely observed that the agrarian law was “impracticable” because men would “soon learn the art which was practised in ancient Rome of concealing their possessions under other people’s names, till at last the abuse [would] become so common that they [would] throw off even the appearance of restraint.”<sup>35</sup>

One further limitation on the right to property needs to be considered, namely *dominium eminens*, or eminent domain. According to this principle individuals could if necessary be “compelled ... to part with their Property” for the sake of a legitimate public purpose (building a road, for example). It was, however, incumbent on the state to indemnify these individuals “as far [a]s possible” for whatever property was “taken from [them] to serve the Publick.”<sup>36</sup>

Reid had been following the rumblings among the American colonists at least since the furore surrounding the passing of the Stamp Act in 1765–1766. At this time he branded the colonists as pusillanimous. He criticized them, that is, for their lack of moral virtue, specifically for their lack of fortitude. By April 1769 he had aligned himself with those who favoured a crack-down on the American colonists.<sup>37</sup>

Reid is reported to have told his pupils in his lectures on political jurisprudence in 1768–1769 that “resistence is bad & ought never to [be] used[. E]ven when two or 3 subjects have their propertys violated, resistance ought not to be made except [when] such oppression is like to be continued and the liberty of the whole subjects [is] at stake[;] then resistance is not only laudable but glorious.” Taxes, according to Reid, are raised “by virtue of *Dominium eminense*” in order to finance legitimate public

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<sup>35</sup>David Hume, “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,” in *Hume’s Moral and Political Philosophy*, ed. Henry D. Aiken (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1948), p. 374.

<sup>36</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 208, 260; cf. *Works*, p. 659a. As Reid wrote to his friend Dr Andrew Skene: “The temper of our Northern Colonies makes our Mercantile people here look very grave Several of them are going to London about this matter to attend the proceedings of Parliament. It is said that the Effects in those Colonies belonging to this town amount to above 400,000 £ St. The Mercantile people are for suspending the stamp Act and redressing the grievances of the Colonists. Others consider their conduct as an open Rebellion and an avowed Claim to independance, Which ought to be checked in the beginning. They say that for all their boasting the Colonists are a dastardly pusillanimous race and that a british fleet and Army would soon reduce them to such terms as would secure their future dependance upon the Mother Country that this is the most proper time for doing so when we are at peace with all our Neighbours. In what light the House of Commons will view this matter I dont know, but it seems to be one of the most important Matters that have come before them. I wish often an evening with you such as we have enjoyed in the days of former times, to settle the important affairs of State & Church, Colleges & Corporations. I have found this the best Expedient to enable me to think of them without Melancholy and Chagrin. And I think that all a man has to do in the world is to keep his temper and to do his duty” (R to S, 30 Dec 1765, NCL MS. THO 2, fos 7v–8r).

<sup>37</sup>Cf. *Practical Ethics*, pp. 130, [140].



purposes, i.e. those sanctioned by the “Publick good” or for the “service of the State in War and Peace.” For Reid such projects included building bridges and fortresses, draining marshes, equipping fleets, making highways, opening canals and promoting agriculture, industry and literature. And when taxes are raised to serve such purposes, Reid asserted, the “subjects consent is not at all thought upon.” As Reid continued, “It is the Deuty of the state to place the power of laying on taxes in such hands as may lay it on equally, and may be rightly managed, this is done accordingly by the house of commons who are representatives of the several shires”. And this being done the State must be supposed to have carried out its duty and its authority to levy taxes thence must be assumed to be legitimate.

Reid was therefore sharply critical of what he regarded as the “mistaken opinion in Mr Lock ... who mentains that the people can not be taxed w<sup>t</sup> out the peoples consent”. He observed “how much mischief this doctrine & opinion has done in America” and suggested that “To conceive ... that every single subject should be consulted whether he may be taxed is a maxime w<sup>c</sup> would indew [undo] all government.” In his lectures on police Reid elaborated on this position, ridiculing Locke’s “absurd hypothesis” that the “Government has no right to touch a farthing of the subjects Money w<sup>t</sup> out their consent.” Reid suspected that “Some [unspecified] Writers”, undoubtedly including Locke in Section 138 of his *Second Treatise*, had been led to this conclusion by “taking the word benevolences in its most proper meaning”. Benevolence, a term dating from the reign of Edward IV, originally referred to a levy made by the King without legal authority. It was with this connotation of the word that Locke and his followers — i.e. “the Americans & Ld Chatam” as well as Chatham’s circle, especially Lord Camden — had got “carried away”. Taxes, Reid asserted, are “not now to be considered as benevolences as they were formerly called, they are to be reconed necisary publick expense”. He regarded as “mear playing upon words” the view of those “writers” who equate *having* representatives with “consenting by representative”. For Reid the justice of levying taxes had little or nothing to do with either representation or consent, for justice in this case requires only that “publick Money be frugally managed and that taxes be made as equal as possible.” As Reid continued, “there does not appear to me a Shaddow of Reason why the Consent of a Subject should be necessary to his bearing an equal Share of the publick burdthen which the service of the State demands.” The “burthen of taxes [is] compensated by the advantage of defence by the Laws and arms of the State.” Reid considered it as unfortunate, therefore, that Locke had “unhappily vented a maxime w<sup>c</sup> perhaps may produce a distressing war betwixt gt britain & its colonys.” Reid concluded by stating

that “we should therefore be careful in venting any Maxim w<sup>c</sup> may be productive of such consequences.”

Here we see Reid’s belief that duty, which arises from conscience and is therefore self-evident, is prior to all considerations of liberty. Whereas all forms of government, including democracy, put some constraint upon liberty, duty places a prior and necessary restraint on individuals and their governors and cannot be gainsaid even by the most liberal forms of government. By Reid’s lights, however, conscience merely dictates the correct use of liberty and must not be regarded as inconsistent with it. Ultimately, a persuasion of one’s duty gives to just governments their authority and revokes the authority of unjust governments. But, as we have seen, the question of when resistance may be justified is a separate, albeit related, question.<sup>38</sup>

As Robert Jack’s notes show, by the 1775–1776 session Reid had added further refinements to his arguments against the doctrine espoused by Locke and his followers. In 1775–1776 Reid countered Locke’s claim that the “state has no right to take away a mans property for the common utility without [his] consent” by making the point that “if we consider property to be as dear as [his] Life, we might as well say that the state could not take away a man’s Life without his Consent”. Yet such “a notion ... would ... unhinge all government & take away all power in that state” no less than the notion that the State has no right to take away a man’s property for the common good. Elaborating on the distinction between having representatives and consenting by representatives, which he had made in previous years, Reid observed that although Members of Parliament represent their borough or town, neither their unanimous consent nor that of their electors, nor that of those who lack representatives — constituents of boroughs that were originally small but are now flourishing, or planters who have not purchased estates in England and who have therefore not become members of the State — is essential to the passing of a money-bill. The principle of majority rule requires only that a majority of Members vote for a proposed

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<sup>38</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 176, 259–260; Monteath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 191, 196–197, 243–244; cf. *Practical Ethics*, p. 208; see also [John Locke], *Two Treatises of Government* (London, 1690), pp. 360–362. For contemporary material relating to Locke and his followers on the question of taxation and representation, see [William Pitt], *Political Debates* (Paris, 1766), pp. 7, 12–13; speeches by Pitt, John Wilkes and Lord Camden in R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings of the British Parliaments Respecting North America 1754–1783*, vol. 5 (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1986), pp. 273–274, 278 (“The spirit which now resists your taxation in America, is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship-money; in England”), 280, 283, 365–366; and the quotations from speeches by Lord Camden in Max Beloff, ed., *The Debate on the American Revolution, 1761–1783* (London: Nicholas Kaye, 1949), pp. 112, 123–124, for example.

measure. As Reid put it: there may be "little inequalities in the representations But this does not take away the liberty of Taxation." The American colonists were not

Aliens as a french Man or a Dutch Man is: They [were] intitled to all the Rights and privileges of British subjects. They [could] succeed to land in great Britain by Inheritance by Disposition or Sale or Testament as any Subject of Britain may. And in consequence of any Succession in Land [could] vote for members of Parliament or be members of Parliament as any other British Subject may be.

Moreover, government for Reid rested on principles in addition to representation, consent and majority rule. Thus Reid maintained that the maxim that the State has no right to take away a man's property for the common utility without his consent, or his consenting by representatives, "has no meaning at all But as Confounds & destroy[s] all government". Reid therefore regretted that this "strange notion" which tends to unhinge "all the very notions of a state" has been "very hurtfully taken up by the American Colonies in the present disturbances," although it was hardly surprising that it would be "readily grasped upon by those who think their rights injured." On the other hand, Reid was inclined to deny that Locke ever intended to "have it made this handle" and went on to suggest that "great advantage has been taken of M<sup>r</sup> Locke when he says & lays it down as a free principle that no body can be taxed without their consent". This lends support to the view that Reid understood Locke in the way that Tully does.

Reid believed that Locke went wrong on the question of taxation because he based his principle on an imperfect view of men's intentions in entering into political society. According to Reid, Locke supposed that men enter into such an association merely in order to defend their property, whereas Reid was of the opinion that men's intentions in this regard were far more complicated. As Reid is reported to have said: the "Intention of mens Entering into society is not simply to defend his property But it is [also] to defend his Life his honour, & his esteem". Reid suggested that if Locke had considered this fact with his "usual acuteness" he might have allowed not only that an individual may be forced to "pay his private debts" but also, by analogy, that an individual may "in a public Capacity" be forced to "pay his public debts which are no less obliging upon him". Reid agreed that in the early days of English society when the Monarchy was supported by Crown lands and taxes were unnecessary, levies were quite rightly called and regarded as benevolences. But he emphasized that times had changed drastically since that time; taxes had "become absolutely necessary for the subsistence of [the] state" and they had therefore become indeed "a kind of duty Imposed upon most people". Moreover should subjects fail to pay their taxes it would

become impossible for the State to do “its duty to provide for & protect the subject, to guard & guide them”. For Reid, therefore, paying one’s taxes was thus a point both of honour and of prudence.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Jack’s Notes, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lectures 120–121, i.e. 26, 29 Apr 1776, pp. 667–670, 673–674; *Practical Ethics*, p. 261; cf. Monteath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 196, 243; see also Jack’s Notes, p. 671. It is interesting that Reid’s view of the disturbances in America remained unchanged during the course of the War of Independence, for in February 1778 (i.e. about two years after he delivered the material of which we have been speaking) Reid wrote to his friend Lord Kames: “I read the yesterdays News, which make me Melancholy, more than I care to own, and more than a Man ought to be who believes the World to be under a good Administration. I believe Lord North allways was & is an honest Man, but he seems to despair of the State more than becomes his place. To give back Canada to France & Florida to Spain, I should have thought a tollerable issue to the War. But to sacrifice all America for a mere name of Dependance without the reality, looks to me very Strange. God Almighty give us a more comfortable Prospect. If the British Lyon must die God grant that he may die like a Lyon & preserve his Spirit to the last Gasp” (R to K, [27 Feb 1778], Ian Ross, ed., “Unpublished Letters of Thomas Reid to Lord Kames, 1762–1782,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 7 (1965/1966), p. 33). Kames was probably sympathetic to Reid’s opinion, given the fact that at the beginning of the decade he had spoken disparagingly about “the American patriotic Spirit” (K to D. Skene, 6 Mar 1770, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 33v).



## Chapter 12

### Pursuing Virtue

In this chapter I will outline Reid's thoughts on the tendency to corruption that lurked within the British constitution, as well as the remedies he proposed for this weakness. What emerges is his unshakeable faith in the importance of a certain degree of moral virtue to the subsistence of every state and his overriding concern with the means of encouraging it. Reid was also critical of the damaging effects of trade and the division of labour and of the use of money on the morals of a people. In this analysis we find reaffirmed Reid's bias for a community of property or, at the very least, of a radical land redistribution policy as discussed in Chapter 11.

1.

Reid followed Montesquieu in regarding the British constitution as "more admirably fitted for preserving the Liberty of the Subject than any other form of government that ever existed ... or even any model that ever was proposed even the Oceana itself".<sup>1</sup> As Reid remarked in his private class at Glasgow: "It is not yet a century since Civil & Ecclesiastical Liberty came to be properly established in great Brittain, and a great part of that time has been employed in resisting attempts to destroy both", pointing out later that "The British Government is now, as I apprehend, more favourable to political Liberty than any other Government ever was, but it has not long been so. Since the Revolution which we may look upon as the era of british Liberty, The principles and the Temper of free Government have been gradually spreading among the people, and are now so established".<sup>2</sup>

Reid also endorsed the following Montesquieuian criticism of the British constitution: "I do not affirm says [Montesquieu] that the extreme degree of liberty which is to be found in this constitution ought to mortifie those who enjoy Liberty onely in a

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<sup>1</sup>MS. 4/III/8, fo. 1r; Montesquieu, see also *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. 157, 166.

<sup>2</sup>MS. 8/I/2, p. 2 (of the second run of pages, which comes immediately after fo. 5v of the first sequence in this booklet); fo. 7r (which is in the third sequence, which follows p. 2 of the second); see also fo. 1r (which bears the date 1 Nov 1766).



moderate degree. An excess of the best things is not always desirable and human Nature suits itself better to a mediocrity than to the extremes even of things that are good.”<sup>3</sup> At this point, Reid invoked the political scepticism we saw in Chapter 9, observing that

this admirable Plan of Government in which every british man glories, and for which the most enlightened of other nations do envy us; was never contrived by any Lawgiver, it is the work of time and of Accidents. The generosity and Courage of the British Nation impatient of tyranny has always made them shake it off when they began to feel it and make such changes in their Political System as seemed most proper for preventing for the future the grievances they had already felt.<sup>4</sup>

In emphasizing the advantage of political liberty, Reid underlined its potential for abuse:

It is one of the advantages of this Government that we may freely philosophize about the principles of Policy and even of our own Government as well as about every other object of human knowledge. A happiness which is not enjoyed in an equal Degree under any other Government. Montesquieu’s *L’Esprit des Loix* was burnt in France & he as well as the other best political writers of that Nation do not chuse to own what they write. In Brittain we see that the Subjects have not onely the Liberty to canvass the form of Government but to arraign the administration of it in a manner that never was permitted on any other Government under heaven. This liberty indeed has of late been much abused & it is to be wished that the abuse of it may not make it necessary to lay some restraint upon it. But there is no Restraint upon a calm and candid Philosophical Discussion of the Principles of our happy Constitution, nor even on pointing out the Defects and weak sides of it that those who have it in their Power may apply the proper Remedies.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>MS. 4/III/8, fo. 1r. Reid’s rephrasing of Montesquieu on this point is highly significant, for Reid would undoubtedly have been uncomfortable with Montesquieu’s scepticism with regard to reason: “I do not claim hereby to disparage other governments, or to say that this extreme political liberty should humble those who have only a moderate one. How could I say that, I who believe that the excess of reason is not always desirable and that men almost always accommodate themselves better to middles than to extremities” (*Spirit of the Laws*, trans and ed. Cohler *et al.*, p. 166).

<sup>4</sup>MS. 4/III/8, fo. 1r.

<sup>5</sup>MS. 4/III/8, fo. 1r. This formula recalls Turnbull’s comment that on the subject of government “we of this nation, and we only, dare write freely. For our happy constitution is the blessed effect of thinking freely on this matter; and it must last uncorrupted, unimpaired, while we continue to exercise the right to which we owe it: A right without the exercise of which men are not indeed men. For who will say that slaves, who know not the price of liberty, or who know not that they are slaves, deserve to be called men” (Turnbull, Remarks on Heineccius, *Methodical System*, trans. Turnbull, vol. 1, p. 323). Moreover, in his own remarks Reid may have been remembering the following reflections in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* which also point to the reciprocal relationship between political science and political liberty: “Nothing tends so much to promote public spirit as the study of politics, of the several systems of civil government, their advantages and disadvantages, of the constitution of our own country, its situation, and interest with regard to foreign nations, its

Reid himself underlined a number of “Defects or Inconveniencies in the British Constitution.” He observed that it lay “a foundation for Corruption or undue Influence in Elections and Nominations which may be used by the Ministry or by the Candidates to Offices & to faction in those that would be in it.” Reid further observed that “A place at Court (is) often got by Opposition to the Administration rather than by serving the Public.” He seems to have followed Hume in supposing that “some degree and some kind of [corruption and dependence] are inseparable from the very nature of the constitution, and necessary to the preservation of ... mixed government.”<sup>6</sup>

Reid went on to suggest that “The British Constitution has a tendency to a Corruption of Morals & seems to have no sufficient provision against that.” He then detailed the aetiology of corruption:

The Corruption of Morals grows from the Influence of And the Example of a Court. the Manner in which Elections & Nominations to offices are carried on The Number of Oaths the Profanation of the Sacraments (i)n being made a Qualification to a place. The Abuse of Liberty of Speech & of the Press its degenerating into a Spirit of Libertinism. The Contempt of Religion & of the Clergy. The Numbers that live a City Life The increase of Trade which makes every thing to be bought & Sold.

Finally, Reid discussed four options for stopping the progress of vice. First, by the “Example [and] Influence” of a “King & Court”, in its “Strict Execution of the Laws against Immorality” (a strategy Reid considered in his lectures on police, as we shall see presently) and “By its Power in Universitys & the Church & in the Disposal of Places”. Second, by the possible revival of the “Censorial Power” of ancient republics. Third, by the substitution of a “Proper Church Discipline” for the censorial power. (Reid was sceptical about this solution, for when he considered “the Education Election & deprivation of Clergymen”, he concluded that “The Constitution of the Churches both of Scotland & England has a tendency to Corruption of Morals among the Clergy. Which must be followed by Corruption among the people”.) And

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commerce, its defence, the disadvantages it labours under, the dangers to which it may be exposed, how to remove the one, and how to guard against the other. Upon this account political disquisitions, if just, are reasonable, and practicable, are of all the works of speculation the most useful. Even the weakest and the worst of them are not altogether without their utility. They serve at least to animate the public passions of men, and rouse them to seek out the means of promoting the happiness of the society” ((London, 1759), p. 355).

<sup>6</sup>*Essays*, p. 45; cf. MS. 4/III/11, fo. 2r: “Whether the Ballance of the British Government inclines more to Liberty or Despotism See Hume Essay on the Independancy of Parliaments on the above Quest.”

fourth, by “The Encouragement of Rural Life & making it free and independant”; on this point, Reid was unequivocal.

He later added a note in which he pointed out the relationship between morals and a sense of (or capacity for) liberty, thus underlining the importance of stopping the progress of vice by such means as those enumerated above. For Reid, everything depended on the preservation of virtue, for “A certain degree of corruption of Morals Makes a people incapable of free Government.” Reid then added “& therefore the br”. If I might finish his sentence: and therefore the British constitution lays the foundation for its own destruction. It is in this light that one must view the question Reid posed at the end of this passage, i.e. “Whether all Governments must have a period as Men have”, which he undoubtedly lifted from Hume’s essay, “Whether the British Government Inclines More to Absolute Monarchy, or to a Republic” (1741).<sup>7</sup> How Reid at this time may have answered the question of the natural inclination of the British constitution is unclear, but he probably would have denied the premiss, insisting that political constitutions have a life beyond corruption. Moreover, he would undoubtedly have taken exception to Hume’s perhaps pessimistic estimate of the consequences of preferring a republican resolution and opted for reforms in the direction of republicanism.

What Reid undoubtedly had in mind by the fourth option was a radical land redistribution policy whereby farmers would no longer be tenants who held their land

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<sup>7</sup>MS. 4/III/11, fo. 2v. Hume had written: “It is well known, that every government must come to a period, and that death is unavoidable to the political as well as to the animal body. But, as one kind of death may be preferable to another, it may be enquired, whether it be more desirable for the British constitution to terminate in a popular government, or in absolute monarchy? Here I would frankly declare, that, though liberty be preferable to slavery, in almost every case; yet I should rather wish to see an absolute monarch than a republic in this island. For, let us consider, what kind of republic we have reason to expect. The question is not concerning any fine imaginary republic, of which a man may form a plan in his closet. There is no doubt, but a popular government may be imagined more perfect than absolute monarchy, or even than our present constitution. But what reason have we to expect that any such government will ever be established in Great Britain, upon the dissolution of our monarchy? If any single person acquire power enough to take our constitution to pieces, and put it up a-new, he is really an absolute monarch; and we have already had an instance of this kind, sufficient to convince us, that such a person will never resign his power, or establish any free government. Matters, therefore, must be trusted to their natural progress and operation; and the house of commons, according to its present constitution, must be the only legislature in such a popular government. The inconveniencies attending such a situation of affairs, present themselves by thousands. If the house of commons, in such a case, ever dissolve itself, which is not to be expected, we may look for a civil war every election. If it continue itself, we shall suffer all the tyranny of a faction, subdivided into new factions. And, as such a violent government cannot long subsist, we shall, at last, after many convulsions, and civil wars, find repose in absolute monarchy, which it would have been happier for us to have established peaceably from the beginning. Absolute monarchy, therefore, is the easiest death, the true Euthanasia of the British constitution” (*Essays*, pp. 51–53).

property in exchange for giving military service or who acted as placemen (to recall Reid's formulation of the system of landholding under despotism); instead, they would hold their land independently of the Crown. When viewed against this background, Reid's subsequent approval of William Ogilvie's *Essay on the Right of Property in Land* (1781) makes perfect sense. Reid's criticism of the law of entail and his advocacy of the breakup of feudal tenures must be regarded as crucial elements in his strategy (whatever that might have been) to implement this policy.

## 2.

Reid elaborated on the theme of preserving morals in his lectures on police, i.e. the second half of his course on politics. He was, however, unsure about the precise distinction between the two halves. At first he suggested that this distinction related to another one, i.e. that between the chief and subordinate ends of political society, the chief ends, which are to be "attained by a proper form and Model of Government", being "Security from forreign Enemies and the maintenance of Peace and justice among the Subjects" and the subordinate ends, the "attainment of which tho not necessary to the being or continuance of it may yet conduce greatly to its wellbeing and Prosperity", being "Population. Virtue, Learning, Riches & Opulence, Publick Revenue and Arms." Later, when he reiterated his distinction between the "primary and Secondary or principal and Subordinate" ends of political society, Reid dropped that part of his original distinction according to which only the attainment of the principal ends was necessary to the being or continuance of political society, stating that the subordinate ends were "whatever may render the Society more happy and flourishing."<sup>8</sup> I would suggest that Reid wavered on this point because of the centrality of one of the so-called subordinate ends — namely virtue — to his very conception of political society.

On the question of the "importance of Virtue in a State and the Means by which it may be most effectually promoted" Reid began in highly Montesquieuian fashion. He was interested not so much in the moral or religious significance of virtue as in its political importance.<sup>9</sup> As he wrote:

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<sup>8</sup>MSS. 4/III/9, fo. 2r; 4/III/10, fo. 1r.

<sup>9</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fo. 2v; cf. Montesquieu, Author's Explanatory Notes to *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Nugent; ed. Franz Neumann, p. 71: "For the better understanding of the first four books of this work, it is to be observed that what I distinguish by the name of virtue, in a republic, is the love of one's country, that is, the love of equality. It is not a moral, nor a Christian, but a political virtue; and it

That Virtue is the highest Excellence of a Man[,] that it contributes more than all other things put together to make a man usefull to others and happy in himself in the present Life and is the onely mean of securing happiness in the life to come; these are no doubt truths of the highest importance, but they do not belong to our present Argument which leads us onely to consider how far Virtue is necessary or conducive towards making men good citizens or good Members of a State. As far as it deserves the Care and Attention of the Legislator, and he neglects an important part of his province if he takes no Care of it.

It is doubtful that Reid would have endorsed Montesquieu's view that, although "in every country in the world morality is desired", what is esteemed to be morality in a given country will be deemed so relative to the agenda of the political regime. In his *Spirit of the Laws* Montesquieu wrote: "I speak here about political virtue, which is moral virtue in the sense that it points toward the general good, very little about moral virtues, and not at all about that virtue which relates to revealed truths."<sup>10</sup> Reid would doubtless have appreciated Montesquieu's reference to the general good but in the above passage Reid clearly and unequivocally understood virtue to be *moral* virtue. His point was that a man may be a good citizen without being a good man in the sense of possessing the highest degree of moral virtue. Hence Reid's observation:

It appears to be very certain that all wise Schemes of Political Government suppose men to be neither perfectly virtuous nor perfectly vicious & profligate[. I]f men were perfectly virtuous there would be little Use for political Government[;] men would live very happily without it, they would onely need to know their duty in order to do it and would not need to be compelled to it by laws & sanctions.

Here Reid was very likely alluding to 1 Timothy 1.9: "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers".<sup>11</sup> For in a related passage composed sometime after 1766 he remarked: "If men were perfectly virtuous & proof against all temptations there would be no Need of Civil Government. Men would do their duty without being compelled by Laws and punishments. It is therefore very true which a sacred writer observes that the Law is not made for the just but for the unjust."<sup>12</sup>

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is the spring which sets the republican government in motion, as honor is the spring which gives motion to monarchy."

<sup>10</sup>Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. xli; 25, n. 9.

<sup>11</sup>*The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments* [AV] (Oxford, [1764]).

<sup>12</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 5r.



On the other hand, if any political society were composed entirely of unjust men no degree of moral virtue could provide a sufficient “cement or principle of Union” to hold it together:

if all the members of a state were as wicked and profligate as some individuals are no Scheme of Government would be sufficient to hold them together, the Society behoved to disband, every individual would be as a beast of prey to the rest and they would mutually destroy each other. All political Government therefore supposes human Nature to be in some middle State between these extreme degrees of Virtue and vice. And indeed it has always been so in the bulk of Mankind. and we have no reason to believe that there is any nation on the face of the Earth where the whole or the greater part are so extreamly wicked and so abandoned as some individuals in every nation may be found to be But between the extremes of Virtue and vice which may (on the) one hand make Political Government unnecessary or on the other hand make it impossible there are a great many different degrees of Corruption of Morals in the body of a State which may make political Government more or less easy and more or less secure and quiet.<sup>13</sup>

At this point in his argument, Reid summarized Montesquieu’s teaching on political virtue, but was careful to note an important point of disagreement: some degree of virtue, according to Reid, was necessary to maintain even a despotism. As I have shown, the virtues of a people subject to despotic power were chiefly the passive virtues of patience and resignation, but also included “fair Dealing” and honesty.<sup>14</sup> Thus, despite his best efforts, and unlike Machiavelli and Montesquieu, Reid found himself unable to make a firm distinction between the ethico-theological and political faces of virtue. He did not understand virtue to be either extraordinary prudence in a ruler or an optional quality in the ruled, depending on the regime under which they happened to live. For Reid, virtue was rather a medium grade of those intellectual habits the acquisition of which was no less essential to making good citizens or good members of the State (whatever its form) than it was to making people happy or earning them a place in Heaven.

Reid’s stance was polemical. Against the Machiavellian view that moral virtue is either dangerous to its possessor or unattainable by the politician, Reid argued that a modest degree of this virtue was both within the reach of most people (governors and governed alike) and necessary to the very existence of political society. Consequently he aligned himself against Montesquieu, who allowed that “virtuous princes are not

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<sup>13</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fo. 2v.

<sup>14</sup>MS. 4/III/1, fo. 1v; cf. *Practical Ethics*, pp. 121, 157; *Works*, pp. 663a, 667a.

rare” but suggested in the same breath that in a “monarchy it is very difficult for the people to be virtuous.”<sup>15</sup> As a result Montesquieu emphasized the separation and balance of powers (an institutional mechanism) and minimized the role and importance of personal virtue (which could not be relied upon as a security against the insidious tendency of those possessed of power to encroach upon the authority of others and thus upset the balance of power). Reid’s criticism of Montesquieu was characteristically gentle:

Montesquieu conceives that fear without Virtue is sufficient to support a Despotick Government, that a principle of honour without Virtue is sufficient to support a pure Monarchy such as that of France but he conceives that a Republick cannot Subsist without Virtue. I agree with this Author that a greater degree of Virtue is necessary in a Republick or in any free Government than in a Despotick Government or pure Monarchy.<sup>16</sup>

What Reid is saying is that no regime can subsist without at least some degree of virtue. He would have taken small comfort in Montesquieu’s prevarication that the potential for virtue may exist in a monarchy or that the actual practice of virtue is not inconsistent with the nature of a monarchy:

there is a very great difference between saying that a certain quality, modification of the soul, or virtue is not the spring that makes a government act and saying that it is not present in that government. If I were to say that a certain wheel, a certain gear, is not the spring that makes this watch move, would one conclude that it is not present in the watch? Far from excluding moral and Christian virtues, monarchy does not even exclude political virtue. In a word, honor is in the republic though political virtue is its spring; political virtue is in the monarchy though honor is its spring.

It must be supposed that Reid would have regarded as overstatement Montesquieu’s suggestion that a monarchical government “continues to exist independently of love of the homeland, desire for true glory, self-renunciation, sacrifice of one’s dearest interests, and all those heroic virtues we find in the ancients and know only by hearsay.”<sup>17</sup> By the same token, Reid was not unaware of the substitution of distinction for true duty, of politeness for true prudence, of good breeding for true glory in monarchies, for

Here a Man is taught that his Virtues ought to be such as shew an elevation of Spirit his Morals ought not to be too strait or Stiff. That

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<sup>15</sup>Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fo. 2v.

<sup>17</sup>Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. xli, 25.

his behaviour should allways be frank and Polite. The Virtues which this principle of Honour inspires are not these which point out our duty to others but such as teach us what a man owes to himself. Not those that draw our affections towards our fellow creatures but those that may give us some distinction & preeminence above them. This Honour does not judge of Actions by their Justice or Utility but by their brilliancy and lustre. It aims not at real Worth but at Distinction and Fame. Sincerity Modesty Justice Temperance are to the Man of Honour plebeian Virtues, which have [here Reid ran into difficulty: initially he wrote "no"; later he penned in "little" above it without obliterating or stroking it out, indicating his uncertainty (*little* would have supported Reid's view that virtue was necessary even in a monarchical government)] connexion with the Principle of Honour and ought not to stand in its way, when it aims at any thing that [is] spirited and Noble. The Man of Honour to raise his fortune can Supplant the man that confides in him. He can boast of an amorous intrigue with a person of superior rank or of eminent Perfections, tho the wife of his Friend or benefactor. If he can gain a Post by servile adulation and flattery of one whom in his heart he despises, or by a dexterous piece of Craft & cunning this is a laudable finesse in which he will glory. His honour requires that his should be open and speak the Truth, not from the love of Sincerity and Truth; By no Means. but because to speak the truth is a Sign of boldness and Courage.

Reid accepted that politeness and good-breeding were "noble accomplishment[s] ... which real Virtue and Humanity ought to inspire. As men are born to live together and mutually to promote each others Satisfaction comfort and happiness. And nothing tends to promote peace harmony and good will in Society (more) than a polite and obliging behaviour towards one another." Yet he conceded to the Mandevillian sceptic Montesquieu that these "amiable Qualit[ies] ... [are] often the offspring of Vanity and the desire of Esteem."<sup>18</sup>

Reid also doubted whether there was in Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana* "sufficient provision for preserving that degree of Morals and publick Virtue which is necessary in a Commonwealth." As Reid put it, the duration of such a government requires not only agrarian laws but also the "preservation of Morals. the Suppression of Luxury. The inspiring the people with a Spirit of Liberty[,] of Zeal for the Government[,] of Moderation in the Use of Riches[,] of Respect to the Laws & Magistrates."<sup>19</sup> Harrington merely assumed that the very constitution of a popular government, i.e. the senate debating and proposing, the people resolving and the

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<sup>18</sup>MS. 4/III/14, fo. 2v; cf. Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. 31–34. Montesquieu himself made the highly Mandevillian remark that in monarchies "each person works for the common good ... believing he works for his individual interests" (p. 27).

<sup>19</sup>MS. 4/III/6, fo. 1r.

magistracy executing, guaranteed its virtue. As Harrington put it: "reason in the debate of a commonwealth, being brought forth by the result, must be virtue".<sup>20</sup>

Undoubtedly Reid would have had more sympathy for Montesquieu's view that in republican governments the "full power of education is needed" in addition to institutional checks and balances to "mould Men into that Character and temper which agrees best with the Nature of the Government", for "political virtue" (or "love of the homeland and of equality") is a "renunciation of oneself, which is always a very painful thing."<sup>21</sup> But, to repeat, Reid went beyond Montesquieu (who had denied that the virtue which was the "leading Principle" of republican governments was a "moral or a Christian virtue") and spoke of the "Morals and publick Virtue which is necessary in a Commonwealth." Moreover, he broadened the definition of that virtue which is "suited to the Nature of [republican governments]" to include the "Love [of] their Constitution ... of Liberty and of the Laws", which he declared to be the "true Spirit of a free Government". Reid could scarcely have stated his preference for republics in more certain terms.

The difference between the views of Reid and Montesquieu on the subject of virtue in republics is brought into high relief in Montesquieu's account of the virtue of Sparta, which showed the extent to which self-denial involved not only the restraint but also the release of the passions. This apparent paradox may be explained by considering that when Montesquieu spoke of self-denial he did not necessarily have in mind a moral virtue; indeed, part of what he meant by self-denial was that forgetting of oneself which implies a lack of awareness of the highest virtue. It was in this spirit that Montesquieu praised the

genius of those legislators who saw that by running counter to all received usages and by confusing all virtues, they would show their wisdom to the universe. Lycurgus, mixing larceny with the spirit of justice, the harshest slavery with extreme liberty, the most heinous feelings with the greatest moderation, gave stability to his town. He seemed to remove all its resources, arts, commerce, silver, walls: one had ambition there without the expectation of bettering oneself; one had natural feelings but was removed from chastity. In these ways, Sparta was led to greatness and glory, with such an infallibility in its institutions that nothing was gained by winning battles against it, until its policy was taken away.

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<sup>20</sup>Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, in *Political Works of James Harrington*, ed. Pocock, p. 170; cf. p. 174.

<sup>21</sup>MSS. 4/III/6, fo. 4v; 4/III/14, fo. 2r; Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. xli, 35.

It is highly significant that Reid identified as the “great End” of republics the “common good of the Whole and the Preservation of civil Liberty”, for he did not apply this description to any other form of government.<sup>22</sup> This must imply that he regarded the republic as the only form of government that reflected the dictates of our moral faculty and truly respected our moral liberty.

Given his belief that some degree of virtue was a precondition of every government, Reid had to consider how this virtue might be secured. His outline of “The means of promoting and preserving Virtue in a State” reiterated some of his suggestions for ways in which the progress of vice in the British constitution could be stopped):

- 1 Good Education. Publick Schools properly endowed and provided.
- 2 Execution of the Laws against Vice and Immorality.
- 3 Zeal & Strictness of Life in the Ministers of Religion & Magistrates
- 4 Care of the Army and Navy. Learning and Arts.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that Reid favoured the gentler methods — education and example — as the most effective in the promotion of virtue. As Monteath’s notes show, Reid believed that “Mens Characters are generally formed from education & example, and those who have had a virtuous life set before y<sup>m</sup> also follow it”. What is more, in a crucial passage on the “education of Youth”, he observed that it is a mistake to suppose that “people who are dissolute, & profain Drunkards & so on, are pitiful Creatures and do hurt only to y<sup>ms</sup>, ... for the vices of individuals hurts always the state, for tis of individuals tis made up.”<sup>24</sup>

Reid continued his exploration of virtue in that part of his course devoted to commerce.<sup>25</sup> Reid pointed out that “The Spirit of Commerce in a Nation is favourable to some Virtues and unfavourable to others.” A heading in his lecture notes underlines his concern with “The ... Effects of [commerce] with regard to the Manners of a

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<sup>22</sup>MS. 4/III/14, fo. 2r.

<sup>23</sup>MS. 2/III/9, fos 2v–3r.

<sup>24</sup>Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 205–207, 213–214.

<sup>25</sup>He began by observing that “Commerce has of Late been made a Subject of Philosophical Disquisition; and as it must be acknowledged to be both a curious and interesting Subject, it has been pursued by many able Writers with much ingenuity, and with considerable Success. It has been made abundantly evident that very gross mistakes in the Political Economy of States have been committed and are still committed through Ignorance of the Principles of Commerce. Future ages must reap benefit from every discovery of this kind, and may on the other hand be greatly hurt by false Notions upon this Subject” (MS. 4/III/3, fo. 3r; cf. Monteath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 217).



people” as well as with regard to “Their Morals.”<sup>26</sup> While no record in Reid’s own hand on this head have survived, a subsequent passage in his lecture notes is very suggestive:

Effects of Trade carried to the highest pitch.  
It increases cities corrupts the Morals of a Nation. Makes every thing venal.<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately Monteath’s notes are more illuminating. Reid’s remarks as recorded there are not without paradox. Although the deleterious effects of commerce upon morals were apparent to Reid, he also had no doubt that commerce had “a mighty influence to enlighten mens minds, & open their Understandings.” It therefore tended both to lead them to a knowledge of “their rights” and to engender in them the “spirit to assert y<sup>m</sup>.”<sup>28</sup> William Robertson, in his *View of the Progress of Society in Europe*, an essay which Reid read in September 1769, expressed a similar opinion of the effects of commerce on the minds and passions of men.<sup>29</sup> Given the similarity of Reid’s line of reasoning, it is not surprising that he should have remarked upon the “Causes which cooperated ... to rouse the Minds of Men and to enlighten them in the principles of Knowledge & Liberty” when he read Robertson on this subject.<sup>30</sup> Such sentiments were very much in keeping with the views of Defoe, Hume and Hutcheson. They also recalled Montesquieu’s view that commerce was a “cure for the most destructive prejudices” and had “everywhere diffused a knowledge of the manners of all nations; these are compared one with another, and from this comparison arise the greatest advantages.”<sup>31</sup>

Reid also underlined the benefits associated with the specialization that accompanies the rise of commerce, as his account of “The Steps whereby Artificial Traffick or the Profession of Merchants is introduced into Society” shows:

1 Labour assorted into particular Trades and Arts which are made distinct Professions. As Shoemakers Weavers Taylors Blacksmiths farmers and the like The Advantage of this to Society 2 Markets or

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<sup>26</sup>MS. 4/III/15, fo. 3v.

<sup>27</sup>MS. 4/III/10, fo. 2r.

<sup>28</sup>Monteath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 214.

<sup>29</sup>In *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*, 11th ed., 4 vols (London, 1806), vol. 1, pp. 34, 37–38, 48, 91, 97; cf. pp. 31, 173.

<sup>30</sup>MS. 4/III/21, fo. 3v; cf. fo. 4r: “The Effects of the Crusades in enlightening those who had been engaged in them”.

<sup>31</sup>Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. [Thomas] Nugent, 2nd ed., 2 vols (London, 1752), vol. 2, pp. 1–2.

Fairs for the Sale of those several Commodities. 3 Merchants who buy at one Market and carry to another 4 Manufacturers who hire artificers to work for them. The last state most favourable to Commerce it multiplies professions, makes men more dexterous and Skillfull in their several Professions more laborious and produces better commodities. Gives rise to the Invention of Machines, & the multiplication of them by which more work is done with the same Quantity of Labour.<sup>32</sup>

Having subscribed to the fashionable view, Reid characteristically then proceeded to qualify his endorsement. For he was quick to point out that the repetitive manufacturing tasks associated with the division of labour among tradesmen, which he regarded as a “g<sup>t</sup> improvement,” had a tendency in the opposite direction. For according to Reid it was

of g<sup>t</sup> hurt to the morals of y<sup>e</sup> people[. T]hus it habituates y<sup>m</sup> to live from day to day[. T]his puts a stop to all project(s) or regard for futurity or old age, they enter into Scenes of riot & disipation for being unlearned[,] they are incapable of any oy<sup>r</sup> recreation, or relaxation from bussiness.

In another place Reid underlined his point that commerce

tends to debase ... understandings as well as corrupt ... morals[.] A Man who is employed from morn to night in turning the head or shaping the point of a pin his thoughts are confined and narrow, and indeed few enter into his head So that he cant at his leasure hours imploy himself in any thing except in drinking & debachery, as indeed the manner of his life leaves him hardly any oy<sup>r</sup> Method of employing himself. for they become like mear machines w<sup>l</sup> out almost those facultys & powers w<sup>c</sup> the auther of nature has implanted in us.<sup>33</sup>

The reported views of Reid on this subject bear a striking resemblance to the opinions expressed in a surviving set of student notes from Adam Smith’s lectures on jurisprudence, which probably relate to the 1763–1764 session. Here Smith is reported to have said that one of the “inconveniences ... arising from a commercial spirit” is that it “confines the views of men.” As Smith explained:

Where the division of labour is brought to perfection, every man has only a simple operation to perform. To this his whole attention is confined, and few ideas pass in his mind but what have an immediate connection with it. When the mind is employed about a variety of objects it is some how expanded and enlarged, and on this account a

<sup>32</sup>MS. 4/III/10, fo. 1v. Reid’s account must be compared with the even more compressed account of “the origin of merchants” in Hume’s Essay “Of Interest” (1754) (*Essays*, pp. 299–300).

<sup>33</sup>Monteath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 223, 237–238; cf. MSS. 4/III/10, fo. 2r; 4/III/15, fo. 3v.

country artist is generally acknowledged to have a range of thoughts much above a city one. ... This must be much more the case when a person's whole attention is bestowed on the 17<sup>th</sup> part of a pin or the 80<sup>th</sup> part of a button, so far divided are these manufactures.

Another passage in the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* which reveals an affinity between Reid and Smith relates to the drawbacks of "putting boys too soon to work":

The boy begins to find that his father is obliged to him, and therefore throws off his authority. When he is grown up he has no ideas with which he can amuse himself. When he is away from his work he must therefore betake himself to drunkenness and riot. Accordingly we find that in the commercial parts of England, the tradesmen are for the most part in this despicable condition: their work thro' half the week is sufficient to maintain them, and thro' want of education they have no amusement for the other but riot and debauchery.<sup>34</sup>

These similarities, both in point of content and of language, suggest that Reid had access to a set of student notes from Smith's lectures.<sup>35</sup> Smith substantially restated his opinion in his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776),<sup>36</sup> a work which Reid evidently read, for notes which he took have survived in his lectures on politics.<sup>37</sup>

Reid was also highly critical of the luxury that accompanied the rise of commerce. In his lectures, he drew a distinction between the "original Value" of things in a "solitary or unsocial State", i.e. previous to all "traffick and exchange", and the value they take on in "a social & commercial State." In a solitary state, each person "will ... be disposed to consider onely his own wants and desires in rating things" and consequently "will value every thing according to the benefite, advantage or pleasure he receives by it." In the social state, by contrast, people "learn to take in the desires

<sup>34</sup>LJ(B) in Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael, and P.G. Stein (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1978, pp. 539–540; cf. p. 541.

<sup>35</sup>Further evidence that Reid's call for notes from Smith's lectures was answered and that he in fact managed to get his hands on a set during his first year of teaching at Glasgow may be seen in the uncanny resemblance that Reid's list of "False Notions concerning Money" bears to the equivalent material in Smith's "Early Draft of Part of *The Wealth of Nations*." Reid's list was apparently a recrafting (probably dating from shortly before April 1763) of the economics material in Smith's lectures on jurisprudence (MS. 4/III/15, fo. 4r; cf. Smith, "Early Draft," pp. 577–578; Introduction to Appendix to *Lectures*, p. [561]).

<sup>36</sup>See *Wealth of Nations*, ed. R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner; textual editor, W.B. Todd, 2 vols (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1976), vol. 2, p. 783.

<sup>37</sup>See MS. 4/III/16, fo. 1r–v; cf. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1776), vol. 1, pp. 34–35, 38–39, 56.

and wants of [others] into the Account” and accordingly learn to value everything according to “what it brings.” As Reid put it,

Traffick and Commerce when carried to a considerable pitch produces a wonderfull Change in many of our Notions, but in none of them does it produce a greater Change than in our notions of the Value of things which may be the Subjects of Traffick.

Thus Reid observed that land “can be of no use” to a man “cut off from all traffick and exchange with other men” except insofar as he

tills and plants it or feeds his cattle in it or hunts on it. If he is not straitned in these Articles anybody may take the rest that pleases he does not think it worth occupation. If he had a forrest of the finest Wood a very small part of it serves all the purposes he can have for wood. If he had full granaries he can consume but a very small part before the grain is corrupted and all that is over is of no more value to him than the clods of the field. If he had Gold and Jewels in abundance they would probably be of no more value in his eye than a bed of tulips. He would not even find that pleasure in his riches which they borrow from the vanity of a man who enjoys them in civil Society because they could procure him no courtship or flattery.

Evidently, it was from the value attached to things in this unsocial state that Reid arrived at his concept of the common good and inferred the illegitimacy of private property in land. The “wonderfull Change” of which Reid spoke clearly involved a corruption of our natural and original sentiments and resulted from the introduction of the use of money and the spread of commerce.<sup>38</sup>

Reid’s line of reasoning must again be compared with that of Locke, who in his *Second Treatise* suggested that

as different degrees of Industry were apt to give Men Possessions in different Proportions, so this Invention of Money gave them the opportunity to continue and enlarge them. For supposing an Island, separate from all possible Commerce with the rest of the World, wherein there were but a hundred Families, but there were Sheep, Horses and Cows, with other useful Animals, wholesome Fruits, and Land enough for Corn for a hundred thousand times as many, but nothing in the Island, either because of its Commonness, or Perishableness, fit to supply the place of Money: What reason could any one have there to enlarge his Possessions beyond the use of his Family, and a plentiful supply to its Consumption, either in what their own Industry produced, or they could barter for like perishable, useful Commodities, with others? Where there is not something both lasting and scarce, and so valuable to be hoarded up, there Men will not be apt

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<sup>38</sup>MSS. 4/III/4, fos 1v–2v; 4/III/17, fo. 1r.

to enlarge their Possessions of Land, were it never so rich, never so free for them to take. For I ask, What would a Man value Ten Thousand, or an Hundred Thousand Acres of excellent Land, ready cultivated, and well stocked too with Cattle, in the middle of the in-land Parts of America, where he had no hopes of Commerce with other Parts of the World, to draw Money to him by the Sale of the Product? It would not be worth the inclosing, and we should see him give up again to the wild Common of Nature, whatever was more than would supply the Conveniencies of Life to be had there for him and his Family.<sup>39</sup>

The obvious Lockean resonances in Reid's lecture notes on this question provide additional support for my view that Reid's opinions on what may legitimately become private property were derived from Locke (at least from the Locke that Tully has portrayed). Reid would, toward the end of his life, develop the theme of money being at the root of all evil and the utopian community of property in his "Thoughts on the Utopian System."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, student ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 301.

<sup>40</sup>See AUL MS. 3061/6, pp. 7–26.



**Section 3**  
**Creating a Political Jurisprudence**

## Chapter 13

### Putting the Science on the Foundation of Rational Liberty

In the 1765–1766 session Reid further elaborated the critique of Hume's politics that he had begun in the previous year. Characteristically, he began by underlining an important conceptual distinction insisted upon by Hume, i.e. the separation of the science of politics from that of ethics. It will be recalled that in his *Treatise* Hume, while acknowledging the dependence of morals and politics on the "knowledge of man," asserted the independence of politics from morals: "morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments: and politics consider men as united in society and dependent on each other."<sup>1</sup> In his introductory lecture and in his *Intellectual Powers* Reid approved Hume's observation that "all the Sciences have a reference to the human Mind & however far they may seem to go off from it, they still return by one channel or another." Yet Reid quickly added that Hume's "sceptical System is all built upon a wrong & mistaken Account of the intellectual Powers of Man," thus dissociating himself from the latter's characterization of the separate sciences of morals and politics.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I describe how Reid strove to underwrite his emerging science of politics–cum–political jurisprudence with what he considered to be genuine first principles and with an account of free will. The result was the establishment of a new science on the foundation<sup>3</sup> of rational liberty.

#### 1.

Reid was also critical of Hutcheson, who tended to blur the distinction between these two sciences, and argued instead on Machiavellian grounds that ethics and politics were and ought to be carefully distinguished from each other. Reid believed that "most writers on Jurisprudence ha[d] confounded [political] Jurisprudence with the Science of Politicks". This was particularly true, Reid continued, of Hutcheson, who had devoted some parts of his *System* and of his *Short Introduction* relating to this part of jurisprudence to questions that Reid believed belonged not to morals, of which jurisprudence was a part, but to politics. He then indicated that he would "entirely

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<sup>1</sup>David Hume, *Treatise*, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 107; cf. *Works*, pp. 217b–218a; Hume, *Treatise*, p. xv.

pass over" these chapters, "leaving the Subjects treated in them to be considered in their proper place in Our System of Politicks."<sup>3</sup> Reid argued that "All Questions belonging to Jurisprudence are Questions concerning Right and wrong." They concern our duties, i.e. what we should or ought to do. Thus in political jurisprudence "we enquire: What the duties of the Citizens are towards the State in general, towards the Magistrate or towards their fellow citizens." Moreover, Reid suggested that in political jurisprudence, as in the rest of jurisprudence, "the Rules of Right and wrong are determined by the Judgment of our Moral Faculty." The "foundation" of our reasonings in ethics, including political jurisprudence, is made of intuitive "Moral Axioms".<sup>4</sup>

The political axioms on which our reasonings in politics are grounded are "of a quite Different Nature" They are not intuitive, but empirical, that is, they are "ascertained from our Knowledge of human Nature, or from Experience".<sup>5</sup> Politics, Reid argued, is "a quite different Science" from ethics or morals:

The intention of this Science is to shew from what Causes the Different Kinds of Civil Government Whether Despotick Monarchical Aristocratical Democratical take their Rise how they are preserved or Destroyed, What Effects they produce with Regard to Liberty National Riches Commere Learning Morals & Religion War Conquest. and what Constitution of them is best adapted to produce those Effects whether Good or Bad.

Reid went on to compare politics to mathematics and physics and observed that in politics we do not "Enquire what is right or wrong either in the Conduct of States or in that of Individuals", just as we would not pursue an ethical line of inquiry into the processes of nature, for example. Instead, "We enquire from what causes Political Events do arise. And what Political Constitutions are most adapted to produce certain Effects or promote certain Ends."<sup>6</sup> In other words, in our political judgements we may be permitted an ironic detachment or double vision that we cannot afford in our

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<sup>3</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 1r. It is undoubtedly this difference with Hutchesonian/Pufendorbian systematics as much as any narrow Baconianism left over from the Aberdeen period that lies behind Reid's remark in the introductory lecture to his course as a whole in subsequent years that "because I know not any one or even a few Authors who have treated these Subjects in that Order & Method which to me seems most Natural, I shall not confine my self by any Text Book But under the different branches shall direct you to such Authors as I think have wrote best on these Subjects" (MS. 7/V/4, p. 17).

<sup>4</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 1r.

<sup>5</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1v.

<sup>6</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 1r.

moral reasonings. But, as I observed in the previous chapter, even this descriptive distance was compassed in Reid within a prescriptive perimeter.

While Reid believed that Hutcheson had confounded politics with morals, he observed that Machiavelli and Harrington were “free from this Fault.” In their systems, politics was concerned with men as they *are* not as they *ought* to be.<sup>7</sup> Where Reid mentions Machiavelli, therefore, it is difficult to resist the suspicion that he had in mind the following infamous passage from the *Prince*:

many Principalities and Republicks, have been in imagination, which neither have been seen nor known to be indeed: for there is such a distance between how men do live, and how men ought to live, that he who learns that which is done, for that which ought to be done, learns sooner his ruine than his preservation; for that man who will profess honestly in all his actions, must needs go to ruine amongst so many that are dishonest. Whereupon it is necessary for a Prince, desiring to preserve himself, to be able to make use of that honesty, and to lay it aside again, as need shall require.<sup>8</sup>

Needless to say, Reid would not have gone along with Machiavelli’s counsel of prudence at the expense of morality, for from the 1764–1765 session onwards he criticized “The Notion of some Minute Politicians that however men in private life are bound by the Laws of Justice and Equity yet it is impossible to govern States properly without sometimes transgressing the Rules of Justice”. Reid regarded this as “dark and crooked Politicks,” which “always sink the credit of a nation and make it suspected and hated.”<sup>9</sup> He also believed it to be “contrary to true Wisdom ... Equity and Truth.” He appealed to the authority of Cicero to “ballance that of a thousand such little Politicians.”<sup>10</sup> The following passage from Cicero’s *De Republica*, 2.44 was evidently a favourite of Reid’s, for he quoted it no fewer than four times in his lecture notes:

There is nothing which I may judge [*putem*] spoken so far concerning the state, and on which I am able to further progress [*progredi*], unless it be confirmed, not only to be false that the state cannot be ruled

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<sup>7</sup>AUL MS. 4/III/3, fos 1r, 5r.

<sup>8</sup>Pp. 582–583.

<sup>9</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. [182]; cf. p. 255; MS. 4/III/10, fo. 1v.

<sup>10</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 273. Cf. Smith’s characterization of Guicciardini’s “whole History [as] a criticall dissertation on the Schemes, the little and often crooked artifices of the times” (Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 115). The same sentiment was also expressed by Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation*, in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. William Hamilton, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1854), p. 488.

without injustice [*iniuria*], but also most particularly, that it cannot be ruled without the highest justice [*summa iustitia*].<sup>11</sup>

This was, of course, precisely the view that Grotius endeavoured to affirm in the opening pages of his *Rights of War and Peace* and the view that Hume had tried to combat in his *Treatise*, as I have shown.

Moreover, while Reid was anxious to maintain the separation between ethics and politics, he admitted that questions of conduct “may be considered either in a political or in a Moral Light”. The sole example he gave was that of “Tolleration of those who are not of the established Religion.”<sup>12</sup> Although Reid’s own notes are somewhat elliptical on this point, Robert Jack’s notes from the lectures on politics in the 1775–1776 session provide useful clarification. Thus the relevant passage in Jack’s admittedly haphazard phrasing reads as follows:

there are some questions which may be either treated politically or Ethically thus whether a departing from the Established Religion right to be tolerated this is trating it Ethically But if it were whether it would be more for the advantage of the society or politically Body that such things should be done this is trating it politically.<sup>13</sup>

Elsewhere in Jack’s notes Reid is reported as saying that “it is a part of the Duty of a nation to have the public worship of god established at certain times & placed & dispensed by certain hands”. On the other hand he remained equivocal as to “Whether it is necessary for a state that there should be an established religion,” regarding this question as one of which “we can Judge only by experience”. Pennsylvania, the one province which had no established religion, had by Reid’s account been “in so short Continuance that we cannot determine what may be the Consequence & cannot determine so Important an Question by so Imperfect an Instance.” On the other hand, Reid suggested that “It seem[s] ... Reasonable to think that there should be some established religion”, for just as

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<sup>11</sup>MS. 2/II/10, fo. 4r; cf. *Practical Ethics*, pp. 182, 255, 273. I owe this translation to my classicist friend Ruth Wade. Haakonssen unaccountably omitted this passage, written vertically from the bottom to the top of the page in the left-hand margin of MS. 2/II/10, fo. 4r, in his transcription of this paper on pp. [237]–244 of Reid’s *Practical Ethics*.

<sup>12</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 5r.

<sup>13</sup>GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 125, 3 May 1776, pp. 715–716. Interestingly enough this issue would become important to the note-taker himself, for he went on to become Secession minister successively at Linlithgow, Greenock and Manchester. See W. Innes Addison, ed., *The Matriculation Albums of the University of Glasgow from 1728 to 1858* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1913), p. 102.



It has been found necessary by some in order for the most better advantage of men that there should be some persons bred up to the study of the Diseases incident to human Bodies & that they should have some trials before they enter upon a dispensing of them ... [so] it is reasonable for us to suppose that those bred up for the dispensing the Ministry should undergo some trials & not be left to the disgression of Individuals the most Impudent & the most Ignorant who might easily fill the people with Inthusiastic notions, & be Very hurtful to a state.

But despite the *political* advantage of having an established religion, some reasonable provision must be made for individuals who do not subscribe to the essential beliefs of the established religion. This toleration was necessary not only for ethical reasons but for political ones as well. As Reid is reported to have said:

it is ... evident that even in the Best Religions & among the Best governed peoples yet every good man may Not all be of one opinion, this cannot possibly be[. I]t is as might as well be supposed that they could have the same coat to fit them all as to make them all of one opinion[. N]ow since this is the case a Toleration seems absolutely necessary & very reasonable because it is very hard for a person to be obliged to fall in with public opinion altho' his own private opinion may be very Contrary ... . Because it surely is very hard but for the good & happiness & quietness of government all well dispensed states have given a Toleration to almost all opinions.

Thus Reid acknowledged that people have a *moral* right to their separate opinions in religion deriving from the faculty of conscience. But it also made good *political* sense to be gentle with certain dissenters. This point is worth underlining, for Reid was obviously not advocating toleration of the intolerant, but only of those whose “opinions were not Contary to the welfare of a state.” Presumably referring to John Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration* Reid is reported to have stated that “M<sup>r</sup> Locke seems to have wrote most sensibly upon the subject”. Reid is also reported to have suggested that “There may ... [be] some sects that need not to be tolerated such as those whild & extravagant opinions of men thinking that it was no Government unless the persons [who] administrated it should be endowed with the grace of god, or of those who own the sovereignty of no Magistrate unless those who are of their own opinion”, for “these shurely are opinions tending evidently to the heart of society & Consequently must not be tolerated.” In such cases the moral right to be tolerated must, in Reid’s view, give way to the political imperative to preserve the State.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>MS. Gen. 118, Lectures 118–119, i.e. 24, 25 Apr [1776], pp. 649–653, 655, 657–658; cf. *Practical Ethics*, pp. 256–258; MS. 4/III/6, fo. 2r, where Reid elaborated on what he considered to be a sufficient trial for a preacher: “Those who contend so earnestly for popular Elections of Ministers among us are for allowing the people to chose upon having heard a Man preach two or three times,

As his course developed Reid found himself collapsing still further his distinction between the provinces of ethics and of politics. He did so in the course of three particular discussions. Taken in the order in which they would finally appear in his lectures these were: first, his inquiry into “the natural Measure of the Price of things in Society”; second, his distinction between the justificatory reasons for war and “The Prudential Motives to War”; and third, his judgement of forms of government by “the moral Standart”.<sup>15</sup> I shall deal with each of these in turn.

Before he began his discussion of the price of things Reid made an apology for mixing with his lectures on ethics reflections which, according to his own definition, belonged more properly to political science: “It is difficult in this question to separate the Provinces of Morals and Politicks Though I have given such Definitions of these as make them very Distinct Sciences, & propose to handle them distinctly yet; yet in this particular Quest and in some others they meet as it were together.” Reid’s purpose in examining the valuation of things was to enable him “to determine more justly the limits of right and wrong in those Contracts wherein a price or Value is put upon things”, for “It can admit of no doubt, that a Man taking advantage of the Ignorance or Necessity of another may take an unreasonable or exorbitant Price and thereby Injure his Neighbour”. Since it was concerned with rights and wrongs Reid’s investigation came within the terms of reference of the science of ethics. But in order to determine what constitutes an injury of this type in the first place he had first to find out “upon what principles the Natural and Reasonable Price depends & how it is measured”, and such an investigation clearly fell within the remit of political science.

The “Natural Measure” of the *value* of commodities, according to Reid, was their relative usefulness in supplying “Mens real or Imaginary Wants” and in gratifying “their desires whether reasonable or unreasonable”. Their *price* also depended upon such wants and desires as well as on men’s “opinions whether wise or foolish,” i.e. upon a “vast Multitude of Contingencies which may seem beyond the reach of Human Prudence and foresight.” Because price depended on opinion, even “the most skillfull in Subjects of this Nature ought to be modest & even somewhat diffident in their Conclusions.” Nonetheless, the “more fixed and determined” nature of the opinion of the many lent some stability to prices or the opinion of value. Reid concluded that “the

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which is altogether an insufficient trial for enabling the people to make a true Judgment. Harrington gives them a Years Trial wherein they have access to observe his abilities and diligence in every branch of his office & therefore may make a much more Rational Choice.”

<sup>15</sup>MSS. 4/III/14, fo. 2v; 4/III/9, fo. 1r; 8/IV/9, fo. 1r; *Practical Ethics*, p. 264.

natural Measure of the Price of things in Society”, or “the natural price of Commodities,” is that which allows those by whose labour given commodities are produced “to live in the manner in which according to the Customs and Opinions of the Country, they are entitled to live.” Such a definition is obviously relativistic, for as Reid freely admitted “this very Standart must vary as Customs and Opinions vary in different Countrys, or change in the Same country in Succession of time.” Accordingly, and shifting from politics to ethics, Reid determined that “Combinations to raise prices [were] wrong” and judged that “Monopolies in order to raise the price to an unreasonable height [were] no less so.” By the same token he condemned the “Practices of Princes and States in debasing the Coin or Raising its Nominal Value” as “Contrary to Equity”, for he observed “Money is not barely a Measure of the price of things but it is a commodity which has an intrinsick value according to its weight and fineness” and therefore it has a “Natural Price as other Commodities have.”<sup>16</sup>

To turn to the second discussion, Reid also distinguished between “justificatory reasons” for making war,<sup>17</sup> which belong to ethics, and “The Prudential Motives to War”, which “belong to Politicks rather than Jurisprudence.”<sup>18</sup> Vattel, whom Reid followed in drawing this distinction, had observed that “As nations or leaders are not only to make justice the rule of their conduct, but also to regulate it for the good of the state. So decent and commendable motives must concur with the justificative reasons, that they should undertake a war.”<sup>19</sup> Of course the words *decent and commendable*, which do duty for *prudential* in this passage, are eminently moralistic terms and correspond to the neo-Ciceronian language of prudence that Reid was developing in his inaugural lecture at Glasgow College. They tend to confirm the view, expressed above, that Reid was comfortable with an ethics-driven science of politics despite the damage it undoubtedly caused to his distinction between “the Science of Ethicks” and that of politics.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, because of his moral and theological biases Reid could not help but judge of a given political constitution according to the end it ought to pursue, i.e. “the good and

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<sup>16</sup>MSS. 4/III/4, fo. 2v; 4/III/17, fo. 1r-v; 4/III/15, fo. 4r; cf. Monteath’s Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 163, 217–218.

<sup>17</sup>Emerich de Vattel, *Law of Nations*, III.3, quoted in Knud Haakonssen, *Commentary on Practical Ethics*, p. 432, n. 49.

<sup>18</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 264.

<sup>19</sup>Vattel, *Law of Nations*, III.3.29, quoted in Haakonssen, *Commentary on Practical Ethics*, p. 433, n. 50.

<sup>20</sup>MS. 4/II/1, p. 2.

happiness of the Governed". It was in view of this end that the members of a political body were to "enjoy the common Rights and Liberties which mankind are entitled to" according to the lights of common sense and conscience. Clearly, in Reid's thought, morals were prior to politics and it is evident that Reid found it difficult to separate the one from the other in attempting to frame an independent science of politics. Thus, in the 1764–1765 session he digressed at length on the conditions a given form of government must meet if it is to be "reconciled [with] the principles of sound Morals". When Reid returned to politics as a science a few pages later, his shift of emphasis from the common rights and liberties of mankind to national defence and justice among subjects is hardly convincing. Plainly, Reid's Ciceronian bias toward holding together prudence and honesty was stronger than his commitment to a Machiavellian science of prudence. His characterization of politics as the art of modelling and governing societies of men so as to answer the end proposed by them, though a pure statement of political prudence, was obviously never intended by Reid as the proper object of political striving, which must include a notion of justice distinct from mere obedience and a concept of real flourishing above and beyond mere survival.<sup>21</sup>

Hence Reid's unforgiving condemnation of Turkish despotism, however perfect a model of its type it was, on the grounds that it rode roughshod over the common rights and liberties of mankind. As Reid put it: "all Despotick Government is in its very Constitution injurious to the Rights of Mankind because it assumes the power of Judging of Mens lives and Fortunes without giving any Security of its Judging according to Equity." "I had rather", he said, "be left in the State of Nature to vindicate my Rights by the vigor of my arm and the assistance of my friends, than in a State of Society (l)eave my Rights depend upon the will of a Man [i.e. the despot], who is tied down by no law in his Judgment." Even such laws as may be established under a despotic government would be "iniquous and unjust and contrary to the rights

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<sup>21</sup>In our own era, political modelling was practised with horrifying results by the National Socialist party in Germany. In 1933 the Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels chillingly described politics as "'the highest and most comprehensive art there is, and we who shape modern German policy feel ourselves to be artists ... the task of art and the artist [being] to form, to give shape, to remove the diseased and create freedom for the healthy'" (quoted in Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* (London: Writers and Readers, 1983), p. 92). Unlike Reid, who had emphasized the encouragement of learning and virtue in characterizing "The art of government" as "the medicine of the mind" (*Works*, p. 578a; cf. Hume, *Essays*, p. 169), the Nazis insisted on much more radical intervention: "'We shape the life of our people and our legislation according to the verdicts of genetics'" (*Nazi Primer*, quoted in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958), p. 350). Moreover, for Reid, a political constitution could not *create* liberty; on the contrary, liberty was the expression of the virtue that sustained it. (Virtue in the sense in which Reid understood it was a quality decidedly lacking under National Socialism).



of Mankind” because they could not possibly be “framed and directed with a view to the good & hapiness of the Subject”, i.e. the “publick good”.<sup>22</sup>

Despite his unwavering condemnation of despotism, Reid bracketed these remarks in his MS, as he did not consider them to be germane to a lecture on politics, and reminded himself that such material “belong[ed] to Political Jurisprudence.”<sup>23</sup> Reid’s decision in this regard is interesting because it shows just how difficult it was for him to maintain the distinction between jurisprudence and politics.

In order to rationalize his own blurring of the distinction between ethics and politics Reid drew an Aristotelian/Hutchesonian analogy between politics and medicine:

Politicks has a like Relation to States & to Government as the Science of Medicine has to the human Body, and the Politician is the State Physician. He knows wharein the Sound & healthfull Constitution of the State consists. When any disorder appears in it he can *judge* [italics mine] by the Symptoms what is the cause of that disorder and he knows what are the Remedies and can prescribe for them with great probability of Success.

In the course of this discussion Reid used the phrase “political Knowledge” to identify the sphere of expertise of the state physician.<sup>24</sup>

In his *Politics* Aristotle was at some pains to emphasize the imperfection of the comparison between the politician and the physician, for physicians “do not act against

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<sup>22</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fo. 1r–v. This principle was so fundamental that it could even apply to our governance of animals. Reid argued that “We have a right to the service of inferior animals” because “A superior degree of knowledge intitles to authority. We ever assume it over Children. Tho’ Brutes may have quicker external Senses, Tho’ they have many instincts, yet they are inferior to men. They are incapable of abstraction or reflection on past & future They therefore want many passions which we have They have no moral faculty. Some of these indeed sensible to Shame as Dogs, who naturally own men as their Master and are unhappy out of Service. They are ashamed in Disgrace & proud of honour but they seem not to have any moral faculty. Tho’ they have some sounds & motions to indicate their passions, yet they cannot be said to have speech, they cannot make covenants, nor are sensible of Obligations from promises They have a bond between male & female, but this lasts not but till the young are capable to provide for themselves. Tho some are gregarious yet instinct alone makes them to what serves the community Nature points out by the aptness of some to be tamed, that they are intended for our use. We have not however a right to make them suffer more than they would in a natural state” (ML MS. 891086, fos 2r–3r, 4r–5v of loose, uncatalogued booklet). Therefore he suggested that “Even that Dominion that we assume over the Brute Animals which serve us such as sheep oxen horses dogs could hardly be reconciled to the principles of Morality, if their life was upon the whole made more unhappy by that Dominion. Far less can any Government of a few over the rest of the human Species be justified if it is not directed to the good and happiness of the Governed. For there is in human Government no Superiority of Nature in the Governors, as there is in mankind over the brutes” (MS. 4/III/9, fo. 1v).

<sup>23</sup>MS. 4/III/9, fos 1v–2r.

<sup>24</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1r; cf. Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 69r–v.



reason on account of affection, but earn their pay by making the sick healthy", whereas politicians "are accustomed to acting in many matters with a view to spite or favor."<sup>25</sup> The fact that politicians often act against reason was not a problem for Reid, for he subscribed to the Ciceronian view that in the true statesman virtue would not only direct the exercise of power but would also be the main source of that power. Reid agreed with Aristotle that a healthy scepticism ought to be preserved with regard to the efficaciousness of the science of medicine and of politics alike. Reid allowed only that the politician can prescribe for disorders in the State with *great probability* of success and Aristotle noted that physicians "sometimes neither judge rightly what the quality of a healthy body should be nor achieve what is productive in relation to the object they set for themselves."<sup>26</sup>

While preparing to read his lectures in 1768–1769 Reid evidently believed his use of the term *political knowledge* in the passage we have been considering to be somewhat opaque and he therefore added the following Ciceronian material as a gloss:

The Analogy between Prudence in an individual and Political Knowledge in the Government of a State⟨.⟩ Prudence consists chiefly in chusing proper Means to accomplish the Ends we have in View. So does Political Knowl⟨edge.⟩ The ends of a Private Man concern him self chiefly & his family & Friends. The ends of a Politician concern the State. Prudence distinguished from Craft in the Politician as in the Private Man. Prudence in the one as in the other grounded chiefly upon the knowledge of Mankind.<sup>27</sup>

Reid's medical metaphor may well have been intended as a response to Hume's view that "every government must come to a period, and that death is unavoidable to the political as well as to the animal body." Reid examined the question "Whether all Governments must have a period as Men have" in his lectures on politics.<sup>28</sup> Hume's

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<sup>25</sup>Trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 114, 217; cf. pp. 200–201; Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. Ross, 1112b ("a doctor does not deliberate whether he shall heal").

<sup>26</sup>Trans. Lord, p. 217.

<sup>27</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1r; see also Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. Ross, 1094b, 1112b. My hypothesis for placing this material here is not disproved by Robert Jack's notes from Reid's lectures, 1775–1776. In Jack's abbreviated version the following passage is placed immediately after Reid's remark on toleration which we examined earlier: "there is a great simularity between prudence in a private life & prudence in a politically capacity. Both prudence in the government of private affairs & political knowlege in the government of a state consist in a Knowlege of mankind by which I dont [mean] any particular set of men". See GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 125, 3 May 1776, p. 716.

<sup>28</sup>MS. 4/III/11, fo. 2v; *Essays*, p. 51; cf. p. 378.

view supposes, of course, that medical intervention in the affairs of the state is futile and therefore denies the reality of political knowledge.

Reid insisted on his medical metaphor to the end, observing in the *Active Powers* that

The most useful part of medicine is that which strengthens the constitution, and prevents diseases by good regimen; the rest is somewhat like propping a ruinous fabric at great expense, and to little purpose. The art of government is the medicine of the mind, and the most useful part of it is that which prevents crimes and bad habits, and trains men to virtue and good habits by proper education and discipline.<sup>29</sup>

Wisdom and prudence were for Reid moral virtues and excluded the Machiavellian formula according to which the end justifies the means. According to Reid "Wisdom & true Prudence" has a regard to the morality of the means as well as to the goodness of the end we have in view and "teaches us to weigh in an even Ballance both the Ends we pursue & the Means of attaining them." In a passage that evokes Plato's "philosophic dog," Reid's man of "upright heart" pursues the "best and the Noblest Ends" and "pants after true Glory & Honour." By his characterization of political knowledge as concerning ends as well as means, and his insistence that political means must be directed towards moral ends, Reid situated the science of politics squarely within the science of morals. Politics could be regarded as a science of prudence only in the fullest sense of the word *prudence*, i.e. the choice of ends as well as the selection of means.<sup>30</sup>

The true statesman constantly had in view the "good and happiness of the Governed", i.e. the noblest end. But because "there may be other ends of Government proposed", the political scientist had to maintain a double vision: "as an expert Physician ought to understand the nature and Effects of Poisons as well as Medicines; so an able Politician ought to understand the nature & Effects of all kinds of Government the bad as well as the good."

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<sup>29</sup>*Works*, p. 578a; cf. AUL MS. 3061/6, pp. 6, 15–16; *Practical Ethics*, p. 105; *Works*, pp. 381a, 387a, 530a.

<sup>30</sup>*Practical Ethics*, pp. 119, 129, 133, 134, 137, 179; Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the *Republic*," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 72, no. 3 (Sept 1978), p. 894, n. 17; cf. *Practical Ethics*, p. 130.

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The remainder of this chapter deals with a further stage in Reid's attempt to create a moderate, Christian and truly scientific science of politics which would be impervious to Humean scepticism on the one hand and warm enough in the cause of virtue to please a good Hutchesonian on the other. Reid attacked the probabilistic necessitarianism of Book 2 of Hume's *Treatise* and the related determinist doctrine implicit in the latter's essay "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science" by attacking the epistemological assumption on which his argument rested. Reid was of course a champion of free will and regarded liberty as the only intelligible foundation on which to construct a science of politics.

The experience of a year in the strongly Smithian and Humean atmosphere of Glasgow must have shown Reid that he needed to shore up the critique he had used at Aberdeen. He rewrote his lectures on political jurisprudence and revised the opening lectures of his politics course in 1765–1766 in an effort to sharpen his attack on Hume and Smith. His lecture notes on political jurisprudence were more than twice the length of those of the previous year, and the introduction to his politics lectures was more fluid and lucid than the somewhat abrupt and telegraphic remarks he seems to have offered the year before.

If Reid's method (or that of any other theological moralist) were examined through Mandevillian or Humean lenses, his political science would appear as an exercise in story-telling subject to the narrative imperative imposed by his own peculiar ethico-theological commitments. Reid's story was about the governance of a society of free beings, whose salvation depended on being able to live in a society free from corruption.

I now proceed to the completely rewritten portion of the 1765–1766 lectures on politics, which contains a crucial passage relating to a central plank of his entire philosophical system, i.e. the concept of free will.

Reid's discussion of this problem was so deeply influenced by Hume that it may be useful to review Hume's arguments for necessity before proceeding further. In the *Treatise* Hume had set out to show that in the moral realm "our actions have a constant union with our motives, tempers, and circumstances" in the same way that in the material world "Every object is determin'd by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion, and can no more depart from that precise line, in which it moves, than it can convert itself into an angel, or spirit, or any superior substance."

Taking as writ the constant conjunction of cause with effect in the bodily world, Hume observed the same relationship between cause and effect in the mental realm, where our motives, tempers and circumstances could be considered as causes of our actions. Experience revealed “the same uniformity and regular operation of natural principles” regardless of “Whether we consider mankind according to the difference of sexes, ages, governments, conditions, or methods of education”, and it is in the uniformity of human actions, according to Hume, that their necessity consisted. This was why Hume spoke of “the necessary and uniform principles of human nature”. This was why he believed that “There is a general course of nature in human actions, as well as in the operations of the sun and the climate”. And this is why he concluded that “There are also characters peculiar to different nations and particular persons, as well as common to mankind.”

Hume was of the opinion that the only way to refute this argument was to deny its premiss, i.e. the assumption that human actions are uniform or necessary, or in other words “regular and certain”. He endeavoured to show that we are forever making judgements in such subjects as politics and commerce that suppose the constancy of the conjunction between the actions of men and their motives, tempers and circumstances, and that we rely upon the necessity of these apparent connections every minute of our lives. Thus, for example, “A prince, who imposes a tax upon his subjects, expects their compliance” and “A man, who gives orders for his dinner, doubts not of the obedience of his servants.” Hume conceded that we often insist on our freedom of action in the face of ineluctable necessity, but he regarded this obstinacy as proceeding from some defect in our power of generating beliefs, whether owing to a tendency to be inconsistent, to engage in revisionism or to give way to fear. We will admit that in performing a given action we were “influenc’d by particular views and motives”, but we nevertheless find it hard “to perswade ourselves we were govern’d by necessity, and that ’twas utterly impossible for us to have acted otherwise”. Or we “imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves” when we perform a given action, even though “a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and disposition.” Or we deny “the doctrine of necessity” because, reasoning under the influence of religion, we believe “’tis of dangerous consequence” to religion and morality notwithstanding the fact, according to Hume, that all law, both human and divine, is “founded on rewards and punishments,” which are species of motives and are “suppos’d ... [to] have an

influence on the mind, and both produce the good and prevent the evil actions.”<sup>5</sup> If there were no necessary connection between rewards and punishments on the one hand and obedience on the other there could be no such thing as a character, i.e. a responsible person on whom to fix blame or bestow praise, for, on the supposition of “the doctrine of liberty or chance,” all actions would be “casual and accidental”, neither adhering to persons nor admitting of approbation or disapprobation.<sup>31</sup>

In his essay “That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science,” Hume extended the necessary connection between motives and actions to include the effects of political constitutions as well as of human and of divine laws. In the following passage he responds to those sceptics who believed that politics was determined by the idiosyncrasies of particular rulers rather than by patterns of behaviour common to most men:

So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which the mathematical sciences afford us.

Hume used this line of reasoning to cut off the arguments of Sir Robert Walpole’s enemies and partisans alike. The former were wrong to blame Walpole for subverting the constitution, because if the constitution were so good in the first place, “it would never have suffered a wicked and weak minister to govern triumphantly for a course of twenty years, when opposed by the greatest geniuses in the nation”. On the other hand, the latter were wrong to mourn his passing and criticize the British constitution, for “Public affairs, in such a government, must necessarily go to confusion, by whatever hands they are conducted”. In both of these rebukes Hume emphasized the necessary connection between political constitutions and the causes of political events. Hume also took here the opportunity to underline “the natural depravity of mankind.” Hence his insistence upon the importance of laws in curbing the idiosyncrasies of individuals. Only the operation of “Good laws may beget order and moderation in the government, where the manners and customs have instilled little humanity or justice into the tempers of men.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>*Treatise* pp. 400–403, 405, 407–411.

<sup>32</sup>*Essays*, pp. 16, 24–25, 29–30; cf. p. 26; *Treatise*, p. 411.



When considered in this context Reid's remarks read like a point-by-point response to Hume calculated to meet the sceptic on his own terms and to put political science on a theologically correct footing. Reid began by restating Hume's problem:

Every Science must be grounded on certain principles & if Politicks can be at all reduced to a Science, as I doubt not but it may, there must be first Principles from which all our Reasonings in Politicks are deduced as there are certain first Principles or Axioms in Mathematicks upon which all our Reasonings in Mathematicks are built, and as there are in Morals certain first Principles ... upon which our Reasoning in the Science of Morals are built.<sup>33</sup>

Already a difference between Hume and Reid begins to emerge, for whereas Hume had concentrated on "general truths, which are invariable by the humour or education either of subject or sovereign," Reid rather emphasized first principles from which all our reasonings in politics are deduced.

Reid began his own account of axioms in politics by attacking Hume's views in the latter's essay "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science" (1741).<sup>34</sup> While Reid was on the whole prepared to accept these general truths as being "principles sufficiently established on good foundation," he denied that they were "first principles".<sup>35</sup> The "first Principles of Political Reasoning must in general be of this Kind, to wit, That such is the Nature of Mankind that Men placed in such Circumstances will generally act in such a manner."<sup>36</sup>

In his "Politics a Science" essay, Hume gave three examples of what he meant by *general truths*. Reid copied down two of them in his notes: first, "That an hereditary prince, a nobility without vassals, and a people voting by their representatives, form

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<sup>33</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1r-v. Reid's formulation was not unlike the view expressed by Shaftesbury in his *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*. Speaking of the British "sense of government" he wrote: "We have the notion of a public, and a constitution; how a legislative and how an executive is modelled. We understand weight and measure in this kind, and can reason justly on the balance of power and property. The maxims we draw from hence, are as evident as those in mathematics. Our increasing knowledge shows us every day, more and more, what common sense is in politics; and this must of necessity lead us to understand a like sense in morals, which is the foundation" (in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), vol. 1, p. 73; cf. "Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author" (1710), in *Characteristics*, vol. 1, p. 189, where Shaftesbury indicated what he meant by *knowledge* in the following terms: "knowledge of human nature or the world"). Reid would have welcomed Shaftesbury's grounding of the sense of government on the sense of morals.

<sup>34</sup>See MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v; Monteath's Notes, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 205; Baird's Notes, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 72v.

<sup>35</sup>Baird's Notes, vol. 7, fo. 72v.

<sup>36</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1v.

the best monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy”; and secondly, the Machiavellian maxim “that monarchies, governed according to eastern policy ... [are] easily kept when once subdued”.<sup>37</sup> While such observations might profitably be debated (Hume in fact made some modifications to them), they were for Reid in the nature of shrewd insights rather than fundamental principles from which a science might be raised. This methodological disagreement figures importantly in Reid’s effort to prepare an alternative account of how “political may be reduced to a Science”.<sup>38</sup>

Reid’s first step was to compare a “Political Body” (by which he meant “a Commonwealth or State”) to “a vast Machine made up of a great Number of Parts.” Continuing with this metaphor, he suggested that “it is impossible to know scientifically the Effects that will be produced by the whole Machine without knowing the parts of which it is compounded and the powers that actuate those parts, for the Effect of the whole is an aggregate or composition of the Effects of the several Parts.” The parts of which a political body is made are of course men, “Each of whom has his particular Principles of Activity in himself, his fears, his hopes his desires, his passions, his Reason, his Conscience.” Moreover, “These principles in every individual influence him to a certain course of Action or operation.” Only by knowing how individuals act in different circumstances can we know how political bodies will act in given circumstances, i.e. “what Effects they will produce”. In such knowledge, according to Reid, consist the first principles of political reasoning, i.e. “the foundation” upon which all sound political reasoning is built, “And the Conclusions that may justly be drawn from such Principles ... make up the Science of Politicks.” By basing his argument on the effects of constitutions and not enquiring into their causes or components, Hume had failed, in Reid’s view, to lay a scientific foundation for political reasoning. Reid’s line of criticism reflects a familiar Baconianism, to which methodology he evidently remained committed despite his new-found Ciceronian political agenda. Reid’s approach recalls Smith’s assessment of Machiavelli, who “seems to have had chiefly in his view to prove certain maxims which he had laid down, as the impolitickness of keeping up a standing army, and

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<sup>37</sup>*Essays*, pp. 18, 23; cf. MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v: “The best Monarchy Hereditary. The best Aristocracy a Nobility without Vassals The best Democracy a people voting by their Representatives. Despotick Governments easily held when Conquered.”

<sup>38</sup>Baird’s Notes, vol. 7, fo. 72v.

others of the same sort, generally Contradictory to the received politicks of the times."<sup>39</sup>

3.

Having been obliged to set up his own discussion of the science of politics in order to respond to Hume's "Politics a Science" essay, Reid was driven next to reply to an argument against the liberty of human actions which had been made very eloquently and forcefully by Hume in Book 2 of the *Treatise* and which Reid perceived to be "a general Objection against all Political Knowledge". It will be recalled that in the *Treatise* Hume had insisted that there is a necessary connection between motives and actions and implied that in fact only on the assumption of such a connection is a science of politics possible at all. In Reid's understanding, Hume's argument proceeded according to the following logic: only if we suppose that actions "necessarily follow upon motives" and that men always act "according to the Strongest motive" can there be any "foundation for human foresight of their Actions from the knowledge of their Situation and the Principles of their Nature." And where we cannot know how men will behave in given situations, there can be no "foundation for any political Knowledge." For if we suppose that human actions are free, we cannot "fortell how a man will act in any particular Situation even although we know all the principles and motives which influence him because he may yield to the force of those motives or ... resist them and act contrary to them." But if we cannot know how any one man will act in a given situation, how shall we know how a great body of men will act (which is of course exactly what we need to know if we are to pretend to have any political knowledge)?

Reid challenged the conception of science on which Hume's "general truths" were raised. His first move in replying to Hume on this score was to best him at his own game by showing that the latter's scepticism with regard to the possibility of political knowledge on the assumption of liberty undercuts the possibility of such knowledge on the supposition of necessity as well. He then endeavoured to prove that even on the supposition of liberty Hume's sceptical "objection has no force against the reality of political Knowledge."

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<sup>39</sup>Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 114.

With regard to the first objection, Reid argued that those like Hume who insisted that there was a necessary connection between motives and actions would have to admit that the motives from which a given action are thought to follow by necessity “cannot be known to a Spectator, nay that they cannot be known to the Agent himself.”<sup>40</sup> To be fair, this formulation involved a slight misrepresentation of Hume’s view, for what Hume actually said was that “a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and disposition.”<sup>41</sup>

Reid was evidently trying to best Hume by being a more thoroughgoing sceptic. His strategy at this point was to emphasize just how very uncertain we can be of how a person is going to behave in a given situations, for “It is evident from experience that the same Motives have not always the same Operation upon the same Man, and that different Men in like Circumstances as far as can be perceived act differently.” From this observation, the libertarian could conclude that there is no necessary connection between the motives and the action, whereas the necessitarian is forced to concede that unknown causes must have been at work. Thus

a Fatalist supposing his System to be true, has no better means of establishing any Principles of Politikks than the Assertor of the Liberty of human Actions. If the fatalist affirms that certain Rules may be pointed out according to which men generally Act, although sometimes from unknown Causes they may deviate from those Rules. This may be affirmed no less on the Supposition of our being free. And whether those deviations from the common Rules of Conduct be the Effect of Necessary but unknown Causes or whether they be the Effect of Caprice in men who act freely, they are equally unaccountable, And all that can be inferred from them is That Politicks is founded chiefly on Probability and not on Demonstration. This is undoubtedly true.

In other words, Hume had falsely dichotomized the question of liberty and necessity. For Reid caprice was not the essence of, but the exception to, liberty. The small admixture of caprice in our conduct was insufficient to impede the growth of political knowledge.

The uncertainty with respect to causes that is common to both the necessitarian and the libertarian systems does nevertheless underline a further, crippling uncertainty that attends all necessitarian calculation but does not arise within libertarian assumptions.

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<sup>40</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fos 1v–2r.

<sup>41</sup>*Treatise*, pp. 408–409.

For while necessitarian argument supposes that “the Action necessarily depends upon the Strongest motive” and admits that “there are motives so hidden & obscure that we cannot perceive them”, whether the motives are known or unknown it does not give us “any Standard by which we may judge of their Strength.” The necessitarian system, that is, does not afford us any test for predicting whether and to what extent passion will prevail over reason or vice versa.

Reid’s next move was to show that we can with a great degree of confidence “know how men will commonly act in certain circumstances notwithstanding the liberty of human Action.” A wise man, Reid insisted, may be counted upon to act wisely even though he is free not to and a good man to act a good part notwithstanding the fact that it is in his power to do otherwise: “in proportion as men are wise and good they will act wisely and well”.<sup>42</sup> It is clear that at least part of what underlies Reid’s difference of opinion with Hume is his view that although human wisdom and goodness are “both imperfect” and consequently “we cannot reckon upon it that [men] will always act the wisest and the best part”, there is nevertheless, as Reid put it, “some degree of Wisdom some degree of virtue even in Men. One that has no degree of wisdom or prudence is an Idiot or Changeling.” (Curiously, *virtue* drops out of the second formulation or is perhaps absorbed by *prudence*.)<sup>43</sup> This is a far cry from “the natural depravity of mankind” described in Hume’s “Politics a Science” essay.<sup>44</sup> Reid did not deny that there are some people completely lacking in wisdom or prudence, but he maintained, as we suggested above, that a political society could not be formed of such people: “Men must be supposed to have common understanding in order to form a Common wealth.”<sup>45</sup> As we shall see in the next chapter, with this assertion Reid effectively laid the groundwork for an argument he would develop in the years that followed, namely that common sense is a prerequisite both for politics and for political reasoning and therefore underwrites the axioms or first principles of politics. (It is worth underlining that Reid was here arguing from character, not from motives, which of course formed the basis of Hume’s case. In this Hume exhibited a pragmatic scepticism with regard to human character according to which individuals tend to act upon, rather than rise above, low motives, thus compromising themselves instead of retaining their integrity. Reid, by contrast, was inclined to set rather more store by a

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<sup>42</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2r-v; cf. *Works*, pp. 609a, 612a.

<sup>43</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v.

<sup>44</sup>*Essays*, p. 24; cf. *Treatise*, p. 411.

<sup>45</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v.



regard to reputation and a reliance on *voluntary* regularity.) In the *Treatise* Hume had suggested that anybody who admitted such a probability but denied that necessity underwrote it was merely engaging in a verbal dispute, i.e. "altering [his] definitions, and assigning a different meaning to the terms of cause, and effect, and necessity, and liberty, and chance."<sup>46</sup>

Reid's views on character may also be regarded as a critique of Smith's views as reported in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, to which Reid may well have had access. Smith had spoken of the "Generall tenor of conduct which [a] person follows," deriving from the "prevailing temper and passions of the man". As Smith put it, "Tis not the degrees of virtue or vice, of courage, good nature etc. that distinguish a character, as the particular turns they have received from the temper and turn of the mind". The following passage indicates Smith's sympathy with the Humean doctrine of necessity with its codicil of caprice which Reid was at pains to oppose:

in no case is the proof of facts from the causes more uncertain than in that of Human actions. The causes of Human actions are motives; And so far is Certain that no one ever acts without a motive. But then it is no Sufficient proof that one committed any action, that he had a motive to do so. There are many things which may occasion the contrary. If the action be not suitable to the character of the person the motive will not influence him to commit the action it prompts him to. Besides tho one had a motive to such or such an action and tho it was altogether suitable to his character it is still requisite that he should have an opportunity, otherwise the action could not have been committed. In proving therefore an action to have happend by proving that its causes subsisted, we must not only prove that one had a motive to character, and that he had an opportunity also. But even when all this is done it does by no means amount to a proof of the action. The character of man is a thing so fluctuating that no proof which depends on it can be altogether conclusive. There may many circumstances interfere which will entirely alter the designs and disposition of the person for that time, and prevent the execution of an action even when there is a strong motive for it, the disposition and character of the person agreeable to the action and the fairest opportunity offers.<sup>47</sup>

1765–1766 was thus a period of revision for Reid, in which as well as attempting to correct Hutcheson and to satisfy his own scientific expectations by properly separating the sciences of ethics and politics from each other he also faced up to Hume and

<sup>46</sup>*Treatise*, p. 407; see also p. 403.

<sup>47</sup>Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, pp. 80, 82, 94–95, 171; cf. pp. [78], 79, 92, 194.

applied his theological assumptions to politics by making liberty rather than necessity the basis of his new science of politics.

## Chapter 14

### Framing Governments and Reforming Constitutions: The Centrality of Common Sense

In this chapter I will review the major changes Reid made to his lectures on politics *circa* 1767 to 1769. Against the background of his reading of Sir James Steuart's interventionist *Inquiry*, I will examine Reid's amplified discussion of political modelling, particularly with respect to his views on revolutions, his admiration for Penn's *Frame*, and his criticism of Pope's notion that constitutional form bears no relation to the excellence of a regime. The chapter will conclude with Reid's criticism of Hume's thesis of human depravity. Reid put forth a doctrine of perfectibility grounded on the common prudence and common honesty — i.e. common sense — that may be assumed of any group assembled into a political society.

#### 1.

Undoubtedly owing to the demands of his student audience Reid read Sir James Steuart's two-volume *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* (1767) in the summer of 1767. As Reid wrote to his friend Dr David Skene: "I have gone over S<sup>r</sup> Ja Stewart's great Book of Political Oeconomy, wherein I think there is a great deal of good Materials; carelessly put together indeed; but I think it contains more sound principles concerning Commerce & Police than any book we have yet had."<sup>1</sup> Reid undoubtedly appreciated Steuart's appeal to the "plain principles of common sense,"<sup>2</sup> for we find him referring respectfully to Steuart and frequently drawing upon his work in Monteath's invaluable report.<sup>3</sup> And he must have had some sympathy with the general principles underlying Steuart's emphasis on the long-sighted statesman and his endorsement of interventionist policies.

Given Reid's characterization of politics as the art of modelling and governing states and his confidence in our power to improve ourselves and our situation it is extremely

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<sup>1</sup>R to S, 14 Sept 1767, NCL MS. THO 2, fo. 20r.

<sup>2</sup>James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, ed. Andrew S. Skinner, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), vol. 1, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>See Monteath's Notes, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 217, 232, for example.

likely that he would have welcomed Steuart's conception of political economy expressed in the following terms: "The great art ... of political oeconomy is, first to adapt the different operations of it to the spirit, manners, habits, and customs of the people; and afterwards to model these circumstances so, as to be able to introduce a set of new and more useful institutions." Steuart's division of the principles of politics into those which "regard the cool administration of ... government" and those which "contrive bulwarks against [the] passions vices and weaknesses [of princes], as men" mirrored Reid's division of his subject into forms of government and police.

Underlying Steuart's approach was a direct criticism of Montesquieu, who "reasoned from fact and from experience, and from the power and tendency of natural causes, to produce certain effects, when they are not checked by other circumstances". For, Steuart remarked, "I do not suppose that these causes are ever to be allowed to produce their natural and immediate effects, when such effects would be followed by a political inconvenience: but I constantly suppose a statesman at the head of government, who makes every circumstance concur in promoting the execution of the plan he has laid down." Steuart's statesman "sytematically conduct[s] every part of [the government], so as to prevent the vicissitudes of manners, and innovations, by their natural and immediate effects or consequences, from hurting any interest within the commonwealth." This meant that a "government must be continually in action," for advancing the public good, which is the statesman's duty, makes it incumbent on him to "make every exercise even of liberty and refinement an object of government and administration". As Steuart put it, the "more he has [the people's] actions under his influence, the easier it is for him to make them concur in advancing the general good."<sup>4</sup> State intervention on this scale would be savaged by Smith, who believed that

The uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition, the principle from which publick and national, as well as private opulence is originally derived, is frequently powerful enough to maintain the natural progress of things towards improvement, in spite both of the extravagance of government, and of the greatest errors of administration.<sup>5</sup>

While Reid would have opposed Smith's principle of improvement, he would also have strenuously resisted Steuart's view that self-interest was the "main spring, and

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<sup>4</sup>Steuart, *Inquiry*, vol. 1, pp. 16, 21, 122, 217, 238, 278; cf. pp. 11, 142, 334.

<sup>5</sup>A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), vol. 1, p. 343.

only motive which a statesman should make use of, to engage a free people to concur in the plans which he lays down for their government” and his suspicion that if public spirit rather than self-interest were to “become the spring of action in the individuals of a well-governed state ... it would spoil all.”<sup>6</sup> Reid would have had much more sympathy with Steuart’s view that our “duty [is] ... relative to the general good of ... society.”<sup>7</sup>

Given his own emphasis on virtue and industry Reid would undoubtedly have approved of Steuart’s view that a statesman should “have it in his power at all times, either to check prodigality and hurtful luxury, or to extend industry and domestic consumption” and “make it his endeavour to employ as many of every class as possible, and when employment fails in the common run of affairs, to contrive new outlets for young people of every denomination.” Reid would also have sympathized with Steuart’s recommendation that the state “provide retreats of all sorts, for the different conditions of her decayed inhabitants: humanity, good policy, and christianity, require it.”<sup>8</sup>

Given his own condemnation of monopolies and stringent injunctions against taking advantage of the “many, the poor, and the simple” in those “Contracts wherein a price or value is put upon things” Reid would certainly have supported Steuart’s authorization of government intervention in the grain market to “prevent the frauds of merchants, and to promote an equal distribution of food in all corners of the country”. Reid’s view that a proprietor has no right “not to keep up Mercatable Commodities when the common Good requires that they should be brought to Market” was perfectly consistent with Steuart’s castigation of the “avarice and evil designs of men who hoard [grain] up” in order to make it “rise to immoderate prices.”<sup>9</sup>

Finally, it is not difficult to detect in Reid’s notion of the most natural measure of the price of things an echo of Steuart’s concept of *political necessities*, which referred to those luxuries requisite to keeping us in the style that befits our rank in society, the

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<sup>6</sup>J. Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, 3 vols (1770), vol. 1, pp. 42–3, quoted in Terence Hutchison, “History and Political Economy in Scotland: Alternative ‘Inquiries’ and Scottish Ascendancy,” in Douglas Mair, ed., *The Scottish Contribution to Modern Economic Thought* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup>Steuart, *Inquiry*, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Steuart, *Inquiry*, vol. 1, pp. 73, 323; cf. pp. 263, 267.

<sup>9</sup>MS. 4/III/4, fo. 2v; *Practical Ethics*, p. 207; R to [Dr James Gregory], 5 Sept 1788, in *Works*, p. 73a; Steuart, *Inquiry*, vol. 1, pp. 254, 255; cf. MSS. 4/III/17, fo. 1r; 7/VII/6, fo. 2r, quoted in Haakonssen, *Commentary on Practical Ethics*, p. 350, n. 109.



measure of which was “determined by general opinion only, and therefore can never be justly ascertained”, being variable over time.<sup>10</sup>

2.

Reid began his lectures on politics in 1768–1769 as he had done in 1765–1766 by distinguishing between the art and the science of politics and by characterizing the art of politics as having to do with reforming existing constitutions on the basis of the most perfect models. He defined “perfecting” a government as studying the “natural Effects and Consequences” of different political constitutions and hitting upon the “Constitution & model” that is best suited to realize the end for which a political society was instituted or established. “The bussiness of the politician” could be discussed in these practical terms:

either to frame a Model of Government for a larger or lesser political Society. Or to preserve repair alter or amend a Government already formed. To discover the latent seeds of those diseases, which if not cured in time are destructive of the political Union, & bring it to dissolution at last, & to be able to find out and apply the proper Remedies.<sup>11</sup>

This formulation, which as we have seen underlined another of Reid’s disagreements with Hume, was further amplified in his notes on Butler’s *Analogy* on 22 August 1781, where he distinguished between what he called the active and the speculative politician. “The knowledge of the first”, Reid explained,

is of Individuals, that of the last, of the Species. The first is bussied in active Life. He goes deep into the Characters the Talents the Virtues & Foibles of persons with whom he has to do. He observes their looks, their Motions, their most indifferent speeches & Actions as well as those that are more important, & endeavours to penetrate into their Views & Ends, their Principles of Action & how they may be brought to serve his purposes.

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<sup>10</sup>Steuart, *Inquiry*, vol. 1, p. 271; cf. p. 270.

<sup>11</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fos 1r, 5r; cf. MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 3r: “Those who have power or have any share of the Legislature ought to be very watchfull to discover the diseases of the body politick and to apply timely remedies.” There is an echo of Machiavelli in Reid’s suggestion that part of what is implied by the art of politics is the diagnosis and cure of diseases which are potentially destructive of the political union. Speaking of the advantage for a prince in living in a state that he has just conquered, Machiavelli wrote: “he sees the disorders growing in their beginnings, and forthwith can remedy them; whereas being not there present, they are heard of when they are grown to some height, and then there is no help for them” (Nicholas Machiavel[li], *Prince* (1673), in *Discourses upon the First Decade of T. Livius*, 2nd ed., trans. E. Dacres (London, 1674), p. 522).

The Speculative Politician studies the Nature of the human Species, the principles from which they commonly act, according to the variety of Natural Temper, Education, Habit Example and instruction they receive & from these principles accounts for & forms conclusions concerning the Causes & Effects of Political Events.<sup>12</sup>

Reid was quite aware of the revolutionary possibilities here; a speculative politician might, for example, argue for of this line of reasoning: “the Destruction of a bad form of Government ... [as] a mean to the Production of a better”.<sup>13</sup> However, he cautioned his pupils that “Changes in a form of Government that hath been established & acquiesced in ought not to be made without very weighty Reasons”.<sup>14</sup> Reid was also acutely aware of the improbability of sweeping changes, for the surviving evidence shows that in the course of his reflections on Harrington’s *Oceana* throughout the Glasgow period he lectured his pupils on “The Difficulty of totally Changing the Form of a Government even from worse to Better” which arises from customary attachments and entrenched opinions.<sup>15</sup> Thus “It is not probable that O. Cromwell could have established Harringtons commonwealth in England. because of the Attachment of the People to the Old Forms the Hereditary Nobility and the Opinion of the greatest Part of the Right of the R. Family”. In the same spirit was Reid’s observation that a “people long inured to arbitrary Government grow tame and think no more of changing the form of their Government than of changing the Elements or the course of Nature.”<sup>16</sup> Here Reid underlined his Humean view that opinion or belief, no matter how wide of the truth it may be, is the decisive support of government. Changing the form of government must therefore require changing people’s beliefs through a process of enlightenment and moral sensitization.

Moreover, near the end of his life Reid would take a dim view of political revolutions, stating in print

That such Changes are so dangerous in the Attempt, so uncertain in the Issue, and so dismal and destructive in the means by which they are brought about, that it must be a very bad form of Government indeed, with circumstances very favourable to a Change concurring, that will

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<sup>12</sup>MS. 3061/12, fo. 2r; cf. *Works*, p. 237a.

<sup>13</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 1r; cf. Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 190: “In the year 1688 at the revolution viz when King James thought that [he] could change both the form of government & make it absolute beside introduce popery, when this was attempted they all rose to a man”.

<sup>14</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v.

<sup>15</sup>MS. 4/III/6, fo. 1r, the passage in question dating from the 1764–1765 session; see also Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 116, vol. 8, fo. 26v.

<sup>16</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fos 1v–2r.

justify a Wise and good Man in putting a hand to them. It is not with an Old Government as with an old House, from which the Inhabitant, who desires a new one, may remove with his Family and Goods till it be pulled down and rebuilt. If we pull down the old Government, it must be pulled down about our Ears, and we must submit to the Danger of having the New built over our Heads.<sup>17</sup>

Although Reid nowhere said so, presumably he believed that it was within the role of political science to reckon the consequences of revolution and weigh them against the evils of continuing to support a defective form of government. As he put it in his lectures on political jurisprudence in 1765–1766: “The Causes of Resistance ought to be great and Evident &c. All the certain and probable Consequences of it duly weighed.” In a later gloss Reid added the following: “The Evils arising from Resistance greater than those that arise from Suffering”.<sup>18</sup> And, as I discussed in Chapter 11, in the 1768–1769 session he specified that “resistance is bad & ought never to ... be made except ... the liberty of the whole subjects at stake then resistance is not only laudable but Glorious.”<sup>19</sup>

3.

As I have shown, Hume and Ferguson had emphasized that political constitutions were the effect of human action but not of human design. Smith, too, subscribed to this doctrine, as his *Lectures on Rhetoric* show. In the following passage he underlined the role of chance in bringing about “great revolutions and changes in States and Governments”:

The Separation of the province of distributing Justice between man and man from that of conducting publick affairs and leading Armies is the great advantage which modern times have over antient, and the foundation of that greater Security which we now enjoy both with regard to Liberty, property and Life. It was introduced only by chance and to ease the Supreme Magistrate of this the most Laborious and least Glorious part of his Power, and has never taken place untill the increase of Refinement and the Growth of Society have multiplied business immensely.

This scepticism was of a piece with Smith’s sceptical view that the “Practicall Science of Politicks and ... Ethicks” had hitherto been “treated too much in a Speculative

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<sup>17</sup>AUL MS. 3061/6, p. 4, the paper being a discourse read before the Glasgow Literary Society on 28 Nov 1794.

<sup>18</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v.

<sup>19</sup>Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 191.

manner.”<sup>20</sup> It raised the difficult question of the importance of political art and political knowledge in establishing or perfecting a system of government. In the past Reid had taken a Humean line on the matter, arguing that no government could be framed or changed by human art and that the English constitution was the work of time and accident.

In this period, however, Reid abandoned this article of political scepticism. He now characterized great political events not as “the Effects of human Reason and human Passions operating variously according to the Characters of the Agents and the Circumstances in which they are placed, and by their cooperation in multitudes producing, very often without Design, one great Event”, but rather, as “the effects of human power and human reason & passion, operating according the Character & circumstances of the agents.”<sup>21</sup>

Support for my view that Reid changed his mind in this manner comes from Baird’s notes from the 1779–1780 session (although this material probably originated ten or eleven years earlier). These notes show that Reid replied directly to the sceptical argument. According to Reid, the adherents of political scepticism

attempt to weaken the foundation of political reasoning by conceiving, that the great events happening to states, — revolutions of the Government — its progress & decline arise from causes which can neither be foreseen nor remedied by the wisdom of Man or any society of Men but flow from the Nature of things. They will not allow that the glory or duration of Sparta was owing to the wisdom of Lycurgus or the splendor of Athens to the wisdom of Solon, or of Rome to Numa, but that all followed from the particular circumstances of these countries.

Reid cautioned that “This reasoning may undoubtedly be carried to(o) far.” He then appealed to Solomon, i.e. apparently Ecclesiastes 9.15, which Reid remembered as “One by his wisdom may save a city”. To this Reid added the following embellishment: “& no doubt one ... by his folly & vice may destroy a city.” He then offered the following Machiavellian insight:

There is great reason to believe that a political society will more or less continue & flourish according to its first constitution & that when proper remedies are applied to the diseases of that state, it will contribute to prolong its political existence. The Government of great Britain would undoubtedly before now have landed in an absolute

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<sup>20</sup>Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, pp. 41, 90, 176; cf. p. 137.

<sup>21</sup>MS. 7/V/4, p. 16; Baird’s Notes, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 68r.

Monarchy or a Commonwealth, if it had not been for the revolution of 88, which was established then on a proper footing so as to be a limited Monarchy.<sup>22</sup>

Reid confirmed this position in his lectures on Harrington's *Oceana*. In his notes Baird reported Reid's belief that the "best model of a Commonwealth hitherto laid down is by Mr Harrington in his *Oceana*". Reid asserted that forms of government are "better understood by models, than from general principles", and he "wished that this plan of a Commonwealth which Harrington proposed had been exemplified in some state, by which its effects might have been known." He then affirmed that the only attempt to establish "a Government entirely on the plan of Harrington's *Oceana*" had been made in the seventeenth century by the Quaker William Penn in the province of Pennsylvania. Penn, Reid wrote, "seems to have been an upright man & wished to establish a Government which might really promote the happiness of the people & preserve their political freedom."<sup>23</sup>

In view of Penn's success in his endeavour Reid reminded his pupils that "Montesquieu the greatest political writer since Harrington's time, admired it so much, that he said, Mr Pen, without any disparagement might be compared to Numa or Lycurgus."<sup>24</sup> Reid affirmed that Pennsylvania, true to the object Penn had in view, "subsisted for a long time in great tranquillity while the provinces around were all in confusion, or at war with the Indian nations."<sup>25</sup> According to Robert Jack's report of

<sup>22</sup>ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 73r-v; cf. AUL MS. 3061/6, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>ML MS. A104935, Lecture 115, vol. 8, fos 13v, 19r; cf. MS. 4/III/6, fo. 4r: "If the *Oceana* of Mr Harrington is considered in itself onely, or if it were once established in a Nation sufficiently enlightened, & not prejudiced against this or in favours of another form of Government. I conceive it to be the best model of Republican Government that has ever been proposed."

<sup>24</sup>Baird's Notes, Lecture 115, vol. 8, fo. 19v; cf. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 2nd ed., trans. Nugent (London, 1752), vol. 1, p. 51: "Mr. Pen is a real Lycurgus". Montesquieu had in fact described Penn as a true "legislator, an *honnête homme*, [who] has formed a people in whom integrity seems as natural as bravery among the Spartans." He suggested that Penn and Lycurgus were alike in the "unique path on which they have set their people, in their ascendancy over free men, in the prejudices they have vanquished, and the passions they have subdued." According to Montesquieu, the real *genius* or *honesty* of such legislators consisted not so much in suppressing the passions of the people (although in their capacity as legislators they had to control as much as possible their own passions and eradicate, to the extent that this was possible, their own prejudices) as in putting them to work in the service of the state, not in fighting political brushfires but in "fathom[ing] by a stroke ... the whole of a state's constitution." Because of their inability to contain their own particular prejudices, Montesquieu faulted Machiavelli, who was "full of his idol, Duke Valentino"; Thomas More, who "wanted to govern all states with the simplicity of a Greek town"; and Harrington, who "saw only the republic of England, while a crowd of writers found disorder wherever they did not see a crown" (Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Cohler *et al.*, pp. xlv, 37, 618).

<sup>25</sup>Baird's Notes, Lecture 115, vol. 8, fo. 19v.



Reid's lectures from the 1775–1776 session, however, Reid had been unwilling to draw conclusions about a regime that had been “in so short Continuance”.<sup>26</sup>

Although all of the preceding evidence of Reid's change of mind on the question of whether governments can be framed or changed by art derives from Baird's notes from Reid's lectures in the 1779–1780 session, it is known that on 27 August 1768 Reid read both the Charter of Pennsylvania, 4 March 1681 and *The Frame of the Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America: together with Certain Laws Agreed upon in England* (1682). Reid's reading notes provide a very revealing summary of the Preface (“admirably wrote”) to *The Frame of the Government* and give us an indication not only that Reid instantly recognized the *Frame* as “perfectly Republican & Harringtonian” but also of his obvious appreciation of the “Excellent Body of Laws” appended to it. This much of Reid's notes is already enough to corroborate the suggestion that Reid's shift away from political scepticism towards a view that accommodated the ethos of the wise legislator occurred significantly earlier than the 1779–1780 session. A closer reading of Reid's notes further substantiates this claim and sheds new light on the thought that likely informed his lectures on politics in 1768–1769. Insights arrived at in this manner are necessary because Reid's lecture notes are often elliptical, and no more so than on the matter we are considering here.

In the Preface to his *Frame of Government* Penn quoted from three of St Paul's epistles to show, in Reid's paraphrase, “that Government is the Ordinance of God for these two Ends First to terrify evildoers Secondly to encourage and cherish those that do well.”<sup>27</sup> This dovetailed nicely with Reid's view that government should promote the common good, which purpose required the enforcement not only of perfect rights but of imperfect ones as well. Reid would go on to make use of one of these passages, i.e. 1 Timothy 1.9–10 “that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient,” in his lectures on politics first during the 1768–1769 session and every year he taught thereafter.<sup>28</sup> Encouraging and cherishing good men, to proceed with Reid's paraphrase, “gives to Government a Life beyond Corruption, & [makes it] as durable as good men shall be.” This would, of course, have rung true

<sup>26</sup>GUL MS. 118, Lecture 118, 24 Apr [1776], p. 650.

<sup>27</sup>MS. 4/III/19, fo. 1r–v.

<sup>28</sup>As Reid wrote: “It is ... very true which a sacred writer observes that the Law is not made for the just but for the unjust.” See MS. 4/III/3, fo. 5r; cf. Baird's Notes, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 74r: “we see that Laws are made not for the just but for the injurious”.

to a good reader of Montesquieu like Reid, who would have recalled Montesquieu's view that the "principle of despotic government is endlessly corrupted because it is corrupt by its nature. Other governments are destroyed because particular accidents violate their principle; this one is destroyed by its internal vice if accidental causes do not prevent its principle from becoming corrupt."

Next, Reid remarked Penn's injunction against the uncritical application of a single model of government to all times and places: "Models of Government the Author thinks ... may be variable as times and Circumstances require, and that it is not easy to frame any one that shall serve all places Alike." He then recorded Penn's Aristotelian/Harringtonian notion "That any Government is free to the People under it (whatever be the frame) where the Laws Rule, and the People are a party to those Laws; and more than this is Tyranny Oligarchy or Confusion."<sup>29</sup> And, still following Penn's text very closely, Reid remarked Penn's observation "that there is hardly any Government so ill designed by its first founders, that in good hands will no(t) do well enough; and the best in ill ones can do nothing that is great or good".<sup>30</sup> This is of course very close to the view, which we discussed above, that Reid would espouse in the classroom in 1779–1780.<sup>31</sup>

Reid recorded Penn's conclusion and the essence of the subsequent paragraph. The full text from Penn is as follows:

governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments. Let men be good, and the government can't be bad; if it be ill, they will cure it. But if men be bad, let the government be never so good; they will endeavor to warp and spoil it to their turn.

I know some say, let us have good laws, and no matter for the men that execute them. But let them consider, that though good laws do well, good men do better; for good laws may want good men, and be abolished or evaded by ill men; but good men will never want good laws nor suffer ill ones. It is true, good laws have some awe upon ill ministers, but that is where they have not power to escape or abolish

<sup>29</sup>MS. 4/III/19, fo. 1r; cf. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Lord, pp. 103, 111, 113. Penn seems to have been oblivious to some of the darker implications of this kind of argument; these were apparent in Grotius' defence of absolutist regimes, as we saw in Chapter 7.

<sup>30</sup>MS. 4/III/19, fo. 1r–v.

<sup>31</sup>Interestingly enough, the first part of Penn's next sentence, unrecorded by Reid, is consistent with Reid's gloss in his final year of active teaching on the maxim of King Solomon which we quoted above. In Penn's words: "Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give to them; and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them are ruined too". Reid must have approved of Penn's clock metaphor given his strenuous opposition to the fatalism or necessitarianism of Leibniz, who believed that the "mind was originally formed like a watch wound up; and that all its thoughts, purposes, passions, and actions, are effected by the gradual evolution of the original spring of the machine" (*Works*, p. 382a; cf. 526a).

them, and the people are generally wise and good. But a loose and depraved people (which is the question) love laws and an administration like themselves. That therefore which makes a good constitution must keep it, viz.: men of wisdom and virtue; qualities, that because they descend not with worldly inheritances, must be carefully propagated by a virtuous education of youth; for which afterwards will owe more to the care and prudence of founders and the successive magistracy than to their parents for their private patrimonies.<sup>32</sup>

Reid must have sympathized with Penn's improvement-oriented approach and emphasis on education. Moreover, in Penn, Reid evidently found an alternative to Hume's somewhat mechanistic thesis about the effects of political constitutions. It will be recalled that in his essay "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science" (1741) Hume maintained that

So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which the mathematical sciences afford us.<sup>33</sup>

As I will demonstrate presently, Reid could deny the overwhelming force of law required by Hume for his doctrine of probable certainty because he believed that certain things may be assumed of any group of people joined together in political society, or they would not have been able to associate in the first place. Thus by siding with Penn in this debate Reid could combine the certainty he needed in his science of politics with the supposition of free will he needed to underwrite his ethics and theology.

Reid concluded his notes on the Preface to Penn's *Frame* with a paraphrase of the final paragraph. Penn's words "we have ... to the best of our skill contrived and composed the Frame and Laws of this government to the great end of all government, viz.: to support power in reverence with the people, and to secure the people from the abuse of power" provided evidence for Reid's view that governments can be framed by art.<sup>34</sup> In Reid's paraphrase the substance of the rest of the passage is as follows: "Liberty without Obedience is confusion, & Obedience without Liberty is Slavery. To

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<sup>32</sup>Preface to the *Frame*, in Jean R. Soderlund, ed., *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania 1680-1684: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press / Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1983), p. 122; cf. MS. 4/III/19, fo. 1v.

<sup>33</sup>*Essays*, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup>Preface to *Frame*, p. 122.

carry this Evenness is partly owing to the Constitution and Partly to the Magistracy. And where neither of these fail the Government is like to endure.”<sup>35</sup> Thus from Penn Reid learned the importance not only of the appropriateness of the form given to a particular government but also of the integrity of its administration.

4.

After defending the view that governments may be moulded by art Reid carried on as he had done since 1765–1766 by outlining the requirements of a science of politics and considering a major objection to the possibility of political knowledge which allegedly derived from his much-cherished principle of liberty. Whereas individuals may be capricious in their actions, “much more certain conclusions” may be formed about “a body of Men united in political Society”:

although the Many are made up of individuals, yet it is easier, in many cases to guess at the behaviour of the Many than at that of the individuals which compose it[.] The jarring Passions Interests and Views of individuals when mingled together make a Compound whose Nature is more fixed and determined than that of the Ingredients of which it is made up. Wisdom and Folly, Reason and Passion Virtue and Vice blended together make a pretty Uniform Character in great Bodies of Men in all Ages and Nations; where there is not an uncommon Degree of general Corruption on the one hand or of Virtue on the Other.

“It is from this Uniformity of Character in a Multitude of Men notwithstanding of the Diversity of the Individuals of which it is composed,” Reid wrote, “that all General Principles in Politicks are derived”.<sup>36</sup>

Reid’s views on this subject were strikingly similar to Hume’s, for in his essay “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences” (1742) Hume laid it down as a “general rule” that “What depends upon a few persons is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to chance, or secret and unknown causes: What arises from a great number,

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<sup>35</sup>MS. 4/III/19, fo. 1v; cf. *Works*, p. 577b.

<sup>36</sup>It is interesting that in 1764–1765 Reid had used the expression “thrown together” rather than “mingled together”. Reid’s change of terminology is most interesting. The phrase “mingled together” does not carry the same connotation of gross haphazardness as “thrown together.” Whether we are meant to presuppose a deliberate agency in this mingling is less clear, but it seems fair to say that Reid’s change of phrase reflects a view of the complexity more compatible with the idea that government may be changed or framed by art. MSS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v; 4/III/17, fo. 1r; cf. John Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, pp. 205, 218; Jack’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 125, 3 May 1776, pp. 720–722; Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fos 71v–72r.



may often be accounted for by determinate and known causes.” For this Hume gave two reasons. First, in an obvious reference to the Classical notion of the force of rhetoric, he likened the “causes” or principles of action that “beget a particular inclination or passion” to a “contagion” from which “many individuals may escape ... and be ruled by passions peculiar to themselves” but by which “the multitude will certainly be seized ... and governed ... in all their actions.” Secondly, he suggested that “Those principles or causes, which are fitted to operate on a multitude, are always of a grosser and more stubborn nature, less subject to accidents, and less influenced by whim and private fancy, than those which operate on a few only.” Hume then asserted that his general rule applied both to “the domestic and the gradual revolutions of a state” and to “the rise and progress of commerce in any kingdom”.<sup>37</sup>

## 5.

Having enlarged upon his reply to Hume’s objection that political knowledge is inconsistent with the assumption of human liberty, Reid moved on in 1768–1769 to consider a second objection against political knowledge, i.e. Pope’s classic observation that “The good or Bad Effects of Government depend entirely upon the Administration & not upon the form of the Government.”<sup>38</sup> Pope’s view that “in vain does the politician prefer one form [of government] to another” and that “all contests about Governments are vain & idle” was entirely at odds with Reid’s project to establish a system of political knowledge and with his belief that it is the “intention of political knowledge to point out such forms of Government, when ⟨they⟩ find it for their interest to act for the public good.” All that Reid would allow on this point was “that a great deal depends on the integrity & virtue of the administration of the Government” and that in despotic governments, “where all is determined by the will of one”, it is undoubtedly the case that “the happiness or misery of the people depends on it”. He gave as examples of “despots” who had “spread happiness & peace thro’ all” the Roman emperors Trajan and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, while pointing out that

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<sup>37</sup>*Essays*, pp. 112–113.

<sup>38</sup>MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v. This objection had been made with sceptical clarity by the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744) in Book 3 of his *Essay on Man* (1732–1734): “Let fools for forms of Government contest; / Whate’er is best administ’red is best” (quoted in Baird’s Notes, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 72r). As Reid’s own lecture notes consist of heads only in this passage, we shall use Baird’s notes from the 1779–1780 session as a guide to what Reid may have said in 1768–1769.



“others on the same throne, have made every subject tremble.”<sup>39</sup> Baird’s notes from Reid’s lectures on politics in the 1779–1780 session are corroborated on this topic by Reid’s own lecture notes relating to political jurisprudence, which were first read in the 1764–1765 and 1765–1766 sessions. Thus on 11 April 1765 Reid concluded on the basis of the “Valuable Ends that may be attained by a good plan of Government ... that such a Plan is indeed the greatest Good that can be bestowed upon a Nation” and is the reason why legislators or constitution-makers are so “highly revered”.<sup>40</sup> And in his expanded presentation of the material on political jurisprudence on 24 April 1766 he suggested that political government is both a divine and a human institution: divine “because it is the intention of the author of our constitution” and human because “God has prescribed no particular form of government but left it to mens own reason and circumstances to direct their choice”.<sup>41</sup> A “good Form of Political Government is the greatest of all temporal Blessings to a Nation,”<sup>42</sup> Reid continued, and “As the blessing itself is the greatest so that which procures such a form must be a very great blessing also.”<sup>43</sup> It is therefore a “very false Sentiment that M<sup>r</sup> Pope expresses”, for a “Bad form of Government will corrupt those who have the Administration of it, & make them bad when otherwise they might have been good”, whereas a good form of government is “one of the most effectual means of making both Governors and the Governed good, or at least of making them act a good part, & restraining them from actions that would be detrimental to the publick.”<sup>44</sup> Reid later conceded that a bad form of government which is “well administred” will “produce order & regularity if administred by those who ... have the real good of their people at heart.” He gave as

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<sup>39</sup>Baird’s Notes, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 72r–v. Reid is believed to have owned a copy of the 3rd ed. of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations* thought to be housed at the Bodleian Library, although I have been unable to locate it. Reid must have enjoyed reading the Emperor’s *Meditations*, given his appreciation of Epictetus (as I discussed earlier, on whose doctrine of opinion Marcus Aurelius modelled his own in *The Meditations*. See e.g. *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, 2nd ed., 2 vols (Glasgow, 1759), vols 1, p. 145; 2, p. 422. In his essay “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations” (1754) Hume had also spoken of “the age of Trajan and the Antonines” in which the Roman Empire, “civilized and cultivated ... and living under the same regular police and government”, “settled almost in a profound peace both foreign and domestic” (*Essays*, pp. 457–458). Smith echoed Hume in his *Lectures on Rhetoric*. (Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 112: “The Roman [Empire] was in the Reign of Trajan arrived to its greatest pitch of Glory, The people enjoyed greater Tranquillity and Security than they had done in any of the former reigns or indeed in the last 150 [years] of the Republick.”)

<sup>40</sup>MS. 8/IV/10, fo. 2v.

<sup>41</sup>Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104929, Lecture 111, 12 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 84v; cf. Jack’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 116, 22 Apr 1776, p. 627; see also MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 2r.

<sup>42</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 2v.

<sup>43</sup>Baird’s Notes, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104929, Lecture 111, 12 Apr 1780, fo. 85r.

<sup>44</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 2v.

examples of this the Government of Turkey and of ancient Rome under the Emperors,<sup>45</sup> but quickly added that such instances are “extremely rare”, for “Great power intoxicates men & makes them look down upon all others as an inferior species”, making them “apt therefore to degenerate into tyrants.”<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly enough, it was to Hume’s “disputation ... to shew that political may be reduced to a Science” that Reid directed the attention of his pupils in the 1768–1769 session in order to underline his own point that the form a given government takes is important and that it is the business of the politician to make informed choices about forms of government.<sup>47</sup> In his essay “That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science” (1741) Hume had declared himself to be against those who agreed with Pope that administration is all. “I cannot forbear condemning this sentiment,” Hume wrote, “and should be sorry to think, that human affairs admit of no greater stability, than what they receive from the casual humours and characters of particular men.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>In selecting these examples Reid may have been following the lead of William Robertson, who went far beyond Montesquieu in suggesting that order and regularity was not inconsistent with the nature of despotic government in his *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*, which Reid read in the summer of 1769. See *A View of the Progress of Society in Europe*, in *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*, 11th ed., 4 vols (London, 1806), vol. 1, pp. 228–229; 469–471, n. 43; 475, n. 45; cf. p. 100. We shall discuss Reid’s reading notes on Robertson’s *History* later in the present chapter and in the chapter that follows.

<sup>46</sup>Baird’s Notes, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104929, Lecture 111, 12 Apr 1780, fo. 85r; Jack’s Notes, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 116, 22 Apr 1776, pp. 627–628.

<sup>47</sup>Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 109, 6 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 72v; cf. MS. 4/III/3, fo. 2v.

<sup>48</sup>*Essays*, p. 15. It is interesting that this same three-pronged debate — i.e. concerning the possibility of framing or changing governments by art, the very possibility of political knowledge and the importance of choosing among forms of government — which occupied Reid’s attention in the 1768–1769 session was aired again twenty years later in 1787–1788 in the controversy surrounding the ratification of the new American constitution. In that debate Alexander Hamilton dramatized on the public stage Reid’s pedagogical critique of Hume. In Number 1 of *The Federalist* (1788) Hamilton posed the question relating to framing governments to which Reid had addressed himself in 1768–1769. In Hamilton’s words: “It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force” (Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. Benjamin Fletcher Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 89). Hamilton, like Reid before him, made it clear that his allegiances lay with reflection and choice. Just as Reid had done, he appealed to metaphysical argument: in *The Federalist* Number 31, he argued that there are in ethics and politics just as there are in geometry “certain primary truths, or first principles, upon which all subsequent reasonings must depend.” Among these “maxims” in ethics and politics is the proposition “that there cannot be an effect without a cause”. Moreover, in ethics and politics there are “other truths ... which, if they cannot pretend to rank in the class of axioms, are yet such direct inferences from them, and so obvious in themselves, and so agreeable to the natural and unsophisticated dictates of common-sense, that they challenge the assent of a sound and unbiased mind, with a degree of force and conviction almost equally irresistible.” In the style of Reid, Hamilton then invoked the term *political knowledge* to describe this body of certain maxims and self-evident truths in ethics and politics, although he was apparently not as convinced as Reid of the politician’s ability to “foresee”

In the next stage of his critique of Hume's political science Reid addressed the problem of the moral and intellectual capacities that the political reasoner may suppose of the members of a political body. In his essay "Of the Original Contract" (1748) Hume had written:

Were all men possessed of so inflexible a regard to justice, that, of themselves, they would totally abstain from the properties of others; they had for ever remained in a state of absolute liberty, without subjection to any magistrate or political society: But this is a state of perfection, of which human nature is justly deemed incapable. Again; were all men possessed of so perfect an understanding, as always to know their own interests, no form of government had ever been submitted to, but what was established on consent, and was fully canvassed by every member of the society: But this state of perfection is likewise much superior to human nature.<sup>49</sup>

Thus Hume restated his belief that justice was an artificial virtue, underlining his equation of the power of understanding with a knowledge of interest. Thus, too, he downplayed perfectibility, emphasizing the natural depravity of humankind.

Once again, therefore, Hume provided a clear target for Reid, who rejected Hume's indiscriminate assessment of human depravity and prepared the way for perfectibility

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events against which a government must provide or to predict the behaviour of men in given circumstances. As Hamilton wrote: "it cannot be pretended that the principles of moral and political knowledge have, in general, the same degree of certainty with those of the mathematics, yet they have much better claims in this respect than, to judge from the conduct of men in particular situations, we should be disposed to allow them" (*The Federalist*, pp. 236–237; cf. Numbers 23, p. 200; 85, p. 546, both by Hamilton; see also Numbers 16, p. 167; 22, p. 193; 29, p. 229, all by H). And finally, in *The Federalist* Number 68 Hamilton described Pope's maxim as a "political heresy", although he quickly conceded "that the true test of a good government is its aptitude and tendency to produce a good administration." Opinion was divided within the anti-Federalist camp on the utility of debating forms of government. (P. 443; for contemporary documents addressing this point see *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Herbert J. Storing, with the assistance of Murray Dry, 7 vols (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), vols 2, pp. 224; 350, n. 3; 5, p. 24; 6, pp. 63–64, for example.) In this Hamilton, like Reid, showed himself to incline toward a belief in the tendency of a political constitution to achieve its ends mechanistically. Although it must be said that Reid was, probably for ethico-theological reasons, far less inclined than Hamilton was to dispense with the concept of cultivating moral and political virtue as an essential means of ensuring the success of a government (Hamilton merely assumed, for example, "that there will be a constant probability of seeing the station [of President] filled by characters preëminent for ability and virtue") (*The Federalist*, Number 68, p. 443). Indeed, Hamilton seems to have been much more ready than Reid was to rely upon the checks and balances built into well-contrived institutions as a means of "supplying" in James Madison's felicitous phrase, "the defect of better motives" (*The Federalist*, Number 51, p. 356). As I pointed out above, Reid seriously believed that a good form of government "may even reclaim those that were formerly wicked" (Baird's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 111, 12 Apr 1780, fo. 85r).

<sup>49</sup>*Essays*, p. 474.



with his account of “persons of ... a middle Character” who are endowed not only with a “certain degree of Understanding” but also with a “certain degree of Morals”, in other words, those who have common sense and whose actions are governed by the dictates of conscience.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, in this particular, too, Reid could not avoid blending morals and politics. In political science, Reid told his pupils, we must “suppose Men endowed with that degree of Understanding which we actually perceive in the generality of Men that are come to maturity.” In other words, in envisaging a political body we must presuppose that its members be possessed of a minimum degree of common sense. Children and idiots, Reid continued, “do not properly make a part of the political Body” because of “their defect of Understanding” and political events do not “depend upon them.” He observed further that as they are incapable of “directing their own Conduct” and are not, therefore, “capable of political Government”, their actions form no part of the subject of political reasoning.<sup>51</sup>

Reid’s characterization of the prerequisites for entry into a political body agree substantially with the definition of common sense he had introduced to his pupils in his public prelections at Glasgow College at least as early as the 1768–1769 session and which he had been sharpening in prelections he read before his private class in the 1769–1770 session and in discourses he delivered before the Glasgow Literary Society in the winters of 1769 and 1770. In about the middle of December 1768 Reid observed in a lecture to his public class that “Common sense is that degree of natural understanding w<sup>c</sup> distinguishes men that are adult ... from Idiots, Brutes. and Lunaticks.”<sup>52</sup> He elaborated on this definition in the following terms in a paper he prepared for a meeting of the Glasgow Literary Society on 10 February 1769:

Common Sense seems to denote a certain Degree of Natural Understanding that is intermediate between Ideocy on one hand & an uncommon Quickness & Penetration on the othe(r.) We do not attribute common Sense to Brutes nor do we expect to find it in Infants or Ideots; but in persons of mature Age who have no natural Defect we allways expect that degree of Discernment and of Understanding which we call common Sense.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>MS. 4/III/2, fos 1r, 2r.

<sup>51</sup>MS. 4/III/2, fo. 1r.

<sup>52</sup>Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 28.

<sup>53</sup>It is worth pointing out that Reid had initially written that common sense is intermediate “between Ideocy & good Sense” before replacing the term *good sense* with the phrase “uncommon Quickness & Penetration” (MS. 2/III/7, p. 1). While his reason for making this change is unclear, we may conjecture that he was simply trying to make his definition more discursive; when he published his *Intellectual Powers* in 1785, he certainly did not refrain from using the term *good sense*. Indeed, there he remarked that “Good sense is good judgment” and quoted Pope, who wrote that “Good sense ... is

In a second discourse on common sense which he prepared for a meeting of the Glasgow Literary Society in February 1770, Reid made the connection between common sense and political capacity that would appear in material he added to his lectures on politics in this period. His remarks on this occasion are worth quoting at some length:

we mean by it [common sense] that natural Power of the Understanding by which Men that are adult and Sound in their mind are distinguished from Brutes from Ideots and from infants. This Power has been, and indeed must have been an Object of Attention to Men of Business in all Ages, & particularly to Lawgivers Magistrates and Civilians ... . As it is Common Sense that makes Man capable of acting his part in human Society, and that makes him accountable for his Conduct, the Laws of all Nations, and the Practice of all Tribunals, distinguish with more or less Accuracy, those of the human Species who have this Talent from th(ose) who want it, whether through unripe Age, or Dotage, whether from Insanity or Ideocy or Lunacy.

Such are not the proper Subjects of Law and civil Government, they cannot transact bussiness validly for themselves nor be accountable for their conduct towards others. And although they may have Rights and interests which ought not to be violated, yet having no Understanding in themselves to direct their Actions, the Laws of all civilized Nations appoint them to be guided by the Understanding of others.

As Brutes even the most sagacious were never by any Nation thought capable of being the Subjects of civil Laws and civil Government, so all Mankind in the first period of Life, & some individuals through the whole of it, are conceived to be under the same incapacity.<sup>54</sup>

The evolution of the equation of common sense with “common prudence”<sup>55</sup> and its characterization in these passages from the winters of 1768–1769 and 1770 as a degree of understanding essential to our being subjects of law and civil government are undoubtedly the antecedents of Reid’s additions to his lectures on politics in this period. It may be noted that substantially the same points are underlined in the

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the gift of heaven, / And, though no science, fairly worth the seven; / A light which in yourself you must perceive, / Jones and Le Notre have it not to give” (Alexander Pope, *Epistle to the Earl of Burlington*, quoted by Reid, *Works*, p. 422b). Cf. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980), p. 7; MS. 6/I/17, fo. 1r, where Reid seems to have used the terms “reason” and “good Sense” interchangeably; see also MSS. 4/I/3, fo. 1r; 2/III/7, pp. 1–2; 2/III/8, pp. 1, 5–6.

<sup>54</sup>It is interesting that at one point Reid had ascribed rights and interests to the unborn, for after the phrase “they may have Rights and interests which ought not to be violated” he inserted the following interlineation: “as a child may have that is yet unborn”. (MS. 2/III/8, p. 1.) It is unclear why he crossed it out, unless he found the notion too perplexing, involving imponderables like the problem of enforcement.

<sup>55</sup>MS. 4/III/2, fo. 1r; cf. *Works*, p. 422b: “The same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of life, makes him capable of discovering what is true and what is false in matters that are self-evident, and which he distinctly apprehends.”



*Intellectual Powers*. Indeed, it is interesting that a residue of the lectures on politics, which unlike those on pneumatology and ethics Reid failed to publish systematically, should have surfaced in what is perhaps the most pivotal passage of his entire *œuvre*, the one providing the metaphysical underpinning of his entire philosophy, i.e. the famous chapter on common sense.<sup>56</sup> Politics could never have been very far from Reid's mind, a point to which I shall return in the Epilogue.

It is quite possible that Reid was influenced in the passage just cited by the following remarks in Locke's *Second Treatise*:

if through defects that may happen out of the ordinary course of Nature, any one comes not to such a degree of Reason, wherein he might be supposed capable of knowing the Law, and so living within the Rules of it, he is never capable of being a Free Man, he is never let loose to the disposal of his own Will (because he knows no bounds to it, has not Understanding, its proper Guide) but is continued under the Tuition and Government of others, all the time his own Understanding is incapable of that Charge. And so Lunatics and Ideots are never set free from the Government of their Parents; Children, who are not as yet come unto those years whereat they may have; and Innocents which are excluded by a natural defect from ever having; Thirdly, madmen, which for the present cannot possibly have the use of right Reason to guide themselves, have for their Guide, the Reason that guideth other Men which are Tutors over them, to seek and procure their good for them.<sup>57</sup>

Having considered common sense or common prudence, Reid proceeded to a discussion of the second prerequisite of political participation, i.e. common decency or common honesty.<sup>58</sup> Reid characterized this quality as the "cement or principle of Union" that holds a given political society together. He believed that most individuals are animated by this principle of action but admitted that some are "so very profligate and abandoned as to break through all the restraints which either their own interest or that of their families and friends or a regard to reputation lay upon them." Such profligates cannot be depended upon to "act by the Rules of common prudence & decency." On the other hand, there are certain other individuals who are possessed of "such perfect Virtue and Integrity that they have no need of the restraints of human laws and government." Such men "discharge their Duty to the publick & to individuals from principle and inclination and would injure no man even tho they

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<sup>56</sup>See *Works*, p. 422b.

<sup>57</sup>John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 325–326.

<sup>58</sup>See MS. 4/III/2, fo. 1r.

could do it with impunity.” But there are so few who belong to these two classes of men that the “Common maxims of Politicks” do not apply to them, nor do political events depend on them. These maxims apply, rather, only to “persons of ... a middle Character” who constitute the “great bulk of Mankind and of every Political Society” and on whom all political events depend. Speaking now the language of prudence rather than of political knowledge, Reid elaborated on the analogy he had drawn earlier (see Chapter 13) between prudence in an individual and in the government of a State:

Political Prudence is grounded upon the very same Principles as the Prudence of a private Man in his transactions with other Men. Real Prudence in the conduct of Life requires that we should keep the proper mean between too much trust in those we deal with and too much distrust. If we go into the first extream, we expose ourselves to frequent danger & disappointment. If we go into the other extream we shall frequently lose the best opportunities of carrying on our bussiness[.] The prudent Man takes the just medium between these extreams, and by that means generally accomplishes his Ends. The political Reasoner in like Manner must form his judgment of the conduct of political Societies, neither upon the Supposition that they are more vicious & profligate than men generally are nor upon the Supposition that they are more virtuous & upright.<sup>59</sup>

In Reid’s account political prudence was identical to the (moral and intellectual) cardinal virtue of prudence itself. As Reid put it in his ethics lectures:

It is no small point of Wisdom for a Man to know himself and to make a right judgment of his own Talents that he may not put on a Person which Nature has not qualified him to act Nor attempt things beyond his Force. Here the contrary extremes are to be avoided of Presumption & Arrogance on the one hand & of Pusillanimity on the other. Every man should endeavour to know his weak side and his Strong.<sup>60</sup>

Reid therefore offered a Ciceronian account of political prudence in place of Hume’s thoroughly Machiavellian account of politics as a science of prudence. His long-standing tendency to identify the dictates of common sense and of conscience with the common good is typified by his speaking in the same breath of what is “agreeable to

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<sup>59</sup>MS. 4/III/2, fo. 1r–2r; cf. Baird’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 110, 11 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fos 75v–77r; *Works*, p. 470a.

<sup>60</sup>*Practical Ethics*, p. 130; cf. p. 133; MS. 8/1/2, f. 4, quoted in Charles Stewart-Robertson, “Fort and Foible; or on Learning to Exercise the Editorial Mind,” *Reid Studies*, no. 1 (1986–87), p. [28].

reason and Equity and to the publick good”.<sup>61</sup> The connection between political prudence and character is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>61</sup>In his abstract of Wise Club question 51, “Whether it be better that every Verdict of a Jury should be unanimous as it is in England or that the Verdict should be by a Majority as it is in Scotland”, which was handled on 9 Mar 1762 (MS. 6/1/17, fo. 1r).

## Chapter 15

### Taking upon Oneself a Character: The Foundations of Prudence

In this chapter I will examine the last phase of Reid's creation of a political jurisprudence in the classroom at Glasgow. Reid's science of politics culminated in a neo-Ciceronian doctrine of taking upon oneself a character resonant with the Lockean theme of trust deserved or betrayed. Reid was forced into this resolution by his students' impatience with his recital of the modern natural law tradition and their eagerness to proceed to the subject of politics. Reid found himself unable, however, to develop the science of politics as a science of means without giving some account of the ends for which men at first united in political societies and the reasons that might induce a sufficiently enlightened people to abridge their liberty by entering into and remaining in civil societies. These ends provided the critical standard of his political jurisprudence, which now went far beyond a discussion of *whether* a government could be framed or changed by art into a discussion of *when* revolutions could be justified. Here the science and the art of politics, together with those ethical principles that Reid had originally included in his science of politics and later redeployed in a narrowly defined "political jurisprudence," converged in a reconceptualized master science of political jurisprudence. Not surprisingly, the impetus for this realignment was Reid's need to respond to Hume on the subject of contracts, including the original contract between a people and their king.

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In 1779–1780, his last year of teaching at Glasgow, Reid added yet another dimension to his critique of Hume's science of prudence. In characteristic fashion he collapsed still further his previously held Humean distinction between ethics and politics. Reid's reflections on jurisprudence, to which the question of the prudential inducements to political society had belonged prior to the 1779–1780 session, were interrupted by his pupils, who were anxious for him to get on with the science of politics. According to Baird, on breaking off his increasingly belaboured recital of the natural law tradition Reid offered the following explanation:

here I shall stop with this subject for the present, as I have this day received a paper from the greatest part of the students petitioning me to give the Lectures on Politics before them on Jurisprudence. I shall

comply with their desire & begin my Lectures on Politics next meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, in his next lecture Reid began the politics section of his course, beginning by reviewing the first principles in which the science of politics must be grounded. He then deviated from his usual practice of moving directly into the subject of forms of government by adding a new section to his lectures. His purpose was to incorporate at this juncture the material relating to jurisprudence which he had been forced to skip over at the insistence of his pupils and which he had in previous years tried, although not always very successfully, to keep separate from questions which by his earlier, restrictive definition belonged to politics. Reid probably feared that his lectures on politics (which was concerned pre-eminently with means) would be unintelligible without an analysis of the proper ends of government, such as was included in the unused lectures on jurisprudence. Only by examining the ends of government would it make sense to explore the means available to governors in particular regimes. Interestingly enough, Reid's restructuring of the lectures on politics and jurisprudence in 1779–1780 has a parallel in an early schema of politics made by Locke, according to which the subject is divided into “‘Fundamentals’, ‘The form of the State’, and ‘Administration’, and [where] the two fundamentals are *Jus Paternum* and *Consensus Populi*.”<sup>2</sup>

Reid introduced what had previously been jurisprudential material into his lectures on *politics* with the following observation: “It is usual in treating of this Subject to consider the Causes of political Government in general.”<sup>3</sup> This clearly involved a retraction of his 1765–1766 observation that “It is usual with those who have treated of this part of *Jurisprudence* [italics mine] to begin it with pointing out the causes that induced men at first not onely to unite in families, but to form those larger Unions which we call States or Civil Governments.”<sup>4</sup> Having in the previous lecture drawn his usual distinction between political science, which is concerned with “how we generally do act”, and the “Science of Morals”, which deals with “how we ought to

<sup>1</sup>Baird's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 108, 4 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 66v.

<sup>2</sup>MS. c.28, fo. 41, “Sapientia 72”, quoted in Peter Laslett, Introduction to John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 34 and n. ‡.

<sup>3</sup>MS. 4/III/2, fo. 2r; cf. Baird's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 110, 11 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 77r: “It seems proper however to consider in general, before we attend to the particular forms of Government, from what causes, political government would at first arise.”

<sup>4</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 1v.



act," it would introduce an embarrassing contradiction for Reid to refer to writers on jurisprudence when he is trying to stick to the subject of politics *per se*.<sup>5</sup> As it is not likely that he intended to collapse the distinction between political jurisprudence and politics at this point, the most likely explanation for this awkwardness is his ongoing effort to elaborate a neo-Ciceronian science of prudence.

Reid's first observation on this head concerned liberty or free will. In keeping with his ethico-theological views, Reid described the proper use of liberty as requiring the highest prudence:

Every Man is by Nature free; it cannot be said, that there is any constitution of the Author of our Being which leads men to subject themselves to any political Government or Society. All these are the works of Men. It is otherwise with regard to some brutes, instinct leads some of the gregarious kinds to certain species of Government & we may say, that they act agreeably to Nature whe(n) they are members of such a government. But as God has endowed man with reason, he has left it to his own prudence to associate when necessary under proper rules & laws. Some unite under one form of these & others under another nor can it be affirmed that any of them is of divine authority or the necessary result of the Laws of Nature. Children when they first come into the world are destitute of reason, must be under the dominion of parents & therefore are incapable of being members of a political Society, but as they come to years of Understanding the parental authority naturally diminishes. Men then become capable of acting for themselves & have a principle which leads them to assume the direction of their own actions.

Here Reid emphasized that the true origin of political constitutions lay in deliberation and planning or at the very least free choice or consent. He believed that the "love of liberty in all is so strong that there must be some considerable inducement which will make Men subject themselves to these governments which of necessity abridge their freedom".<sup>6</sup> Such inducements will, in principle, be effective among men of common sense or common prudence, i.e. among all those who are animated by that rational principle which leads them to direct their own actions.

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<sup>5</sup>Baird's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lectures 109–110, 6th and 11th Apr 1780, vol. 7, fos 73v, 76v.

<sup>6</sup>Baird's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104935, Lecture 110, 11 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fo. 77r–v; cf. AUL MSS. 8/IV/10, fo. 1r ("the Love of Liberty is so natural to mankind that there must be some considerable inducement to engage them to give up their Natural Liberty & subject themselves to laws and taxes, and be bound to that submission and allegiance which is due to the civil Powers"); 8/IV/9, fo. 1v ("as the Love of Liberty is, and justly ought to be very powerfull in the human kind, there ought to be very powerfull Inducements to engage Men to give up their natural Liberty and to submit to the yoke of Laws and civil Policy").

Reid proposed to enumerate the prudential motives which spurred men on to relinquish some of their freedom, but found it necessary first to separate two questions which are “really distinct yet not commonly distinguished by writers”,<sup>7</sup> that is, “What really and in Fact was and must have been the Origin of the Various States and Civil Governments that have been established. Or what reasons did actually induce those who first framed them to enter into this political Union” and “What Might justly induce men sufficiently enlightened, and acquainted with the Effects that may be produced by Civil Government to enter into this State.”<sup>8</sup>

With regard to the first question, Reid conceded at the outset in Bolingbrokean fashion that the “history of man is too little known to give a clear account of it.”<sup>9</sup> In the course of his remarks he gave little credit to the views of those who “refer the origin of Government to patriarchal authority”, considering in the Xenophontian, Ciceronian and latterly Humean tradition which I examined in Chapter 4 that it was “more probable that some opinion Of superior wisdom, prudence or Virtue was the first cause of investing our [leaders] with great authority.” Where opinion is the source of authority, “reason dictates” our choice of a leader and serves to “render [political society] convenient”. As Reid explained, this is “probably ... the reason why the most antient governments we know of are all Kingly Governments.” These were “abolished and Aristocratical or Democratical [Governments] Substituted in their Place” when they degenerated into tyrannies. Reid concluded his remarks on this subject by drawing an analogy between the origin of government and that of the human body. Just as in our investigation of the human body, “We see [it] when formed & organized but its first origin we know not”, so in our study of governments “we see them in their impressive state but are ignorant of their first origin & we can therefore only form conjecture(s) of what at first united men in political Society.” All discussion of the origins of government therefore collapses into arguments about greater or lesser probabilities, which is to say that such debates must terminate in conjectures about “what could induce men sufficiently enlightened to unite under a civil government”, i.e. Reid’s second question, to which he addressed himself next.

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<sup>7</sup>Baird’s Notes, Lecture 110, vol. 7, fo. 78r; cf. MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 1r.

<sup>8</sup>AUL MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 1r; cf. Baird’s Notes, Lecture 110, vol. 7, fo. 78r.

<sup>9</sup>Baird’s Notes, Lecture 110, vol. 7, fo. 78r; cf. fo. 80r: “We are unable to trace antient Government(s) to their origin, as men must be long under government before the Art & Sciences make any considerable progress & of consequence before a history could be wrote of their transactions.”

Reid began by pointing out that this was not a “question of a master”, for in a “state of Natural liberty every man is his own master,” but of the “prudence of men constituted as Men generally are”, in other words, of what motives “ought to induce” men sufficiently enlightened to “prefer the Political State” in which they are “bound up by ... laws.” Reid also gave some attention to non-rational “Parts of the human constitution” which show us that we are intended for “Political Society”. “The different Capacities of men,” Reid argued, “fit them to be parts of one great Whole.” Moreover, the “Bulk of Men” are “tame and naturally disposed to follow a leader.” The “qualities which produce this Submission and Respect”, i.e. wisdom, valour and power, “especially if transmitted through a long Race of Ancestors”, he continued, are to be found only in the few. It turns out that those who have this “degree of Sagacity” commonly have an “ambition to lead & to govern” as well. As Reid explained, “This disposition in the many to be governed & the few to govern plainly lays the foundation of political Society for were all equal in ambition men never could unite in Society at all.” Finally, he pointed to the “Love of ones Country”, which he regarded as a “Natural Affection” which could “have no Exercise without a Political Union.” Assuming that this affection was given to us for a purpose, it would appear that it was bestowed on us in order that we should unite in political society. While we ought not to underestimate the importance Reid attached to these non-rational factors, it is clear that he considered them as supports for prudence rather than as alternatives to it.

In his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754) Jean-Jacques Rousseau had argued that a state of solitude was preferable to one of society and suggested that the “perfection of our Nature may be carried to the highest pitch there.” Reid disputed this, pointing to the “very great advantages” that attach to the state of political society and which enjoin us to prudence, i.e. to unite under a civil government. At the same time he was careful to avoid the Hobbesian notion that pre-political society was a state of continual fear, with its ineluctable implication that any government is better than no government at all. Reid doubted the existence of such a state of insecurity and denied that the “worst political Government is preferable to the best state of Natural Liberty”. Rousseau was a “professed admirer” of Daniel Defoe’s novel *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a book which Reid apparently also admired and considered to be unrivalled in the portrait it paints of the “Advantage of the Civilized above the Savage.” Yet, Reid complained, as in the case of other “great men” such as Locke and Hume, who from a “desire of peculiarity & a love of paradoxes” were apt to “take up some strange doctrines,” Rousseau preferred the “Savage State to the civilized.” Reid, for his part,

considered that "Robison [*sic*] owed all the Advantages he had over his Man Friday to this that he had the civilization of a common English Sailor," whereas Friday was "next to a Savage."<sup>10</sup> This civilization enabled Crusoe to improvise where the resources ready to hand proved insufficient to the tasks he had set for himself. While Crusoe would come to boast that such problems "cost [him] as much Thought as a Statesman would have bestow'd upon a grand Point of Politics, or a Judge upon the Life and Death of a Man", he confessed that for a considerable time after becoming stranded he was "merely thoughtless of God, or a Providence; [he] acted like a mere Brute from the Principles of Nature and by the Dictates of common sense only, and indeed hardly that." This surprising assimilation of brutishness with common sense would have appealed more readily to a Rousseau than to a Reid, but Defoe's views were less ambiguous in a subsequent passage in which Crusoe remarks that Friday's childlike devotion and engaging simplicity

frequently gave [him] Occasion to observe, and that with Wonder, that, however it had pleased God in his Providence, and in the Government of the Works of his Hands, to take from so great a Part of the World of his Creatures the best Uses to which their Faculties and the Powers of their Souls, are adapted; yet that he has bestow'd upon them the same Powers, the same Reason, the same Affections, the same Sentiments of Kindness and Obligation, the same Passions and Resentments of Wrongs, the same Sense of Gratitude, Sincerity, Fidelity, and all the Capacities of doing Good and receiving Good, that he has given to us; and that when he pleases to offer to them Occasions of exerting these, they are as ready, nay, more ready to apply them to the right Uses for which they were bestow'd, than we are. And this made [him] very melancholy sometimes, in reflecting, as the several Occasions presented, how mean an Use we make of all these, even though we have these Powers enlighten'd by the great Lamp of Instruction, the Spirit of God, and by the Knowledge of his Word, added to our Understanding; and why it has pleased God to hide the like saving Knowledge from so many Millions of Souls, who, if I might judge by this poor Savage, would make a much better Use of it than we did.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Defoe underlines the misfortunes of both Friday and Crusoe. The former is disadvantaged by his underdeveloped rationality and dormant passions, the latter by his gross inattention to the Holy Spirit. The condition of Crusoe was clearly preferable to that of his servant, although even this relatively favourable state was less than could be achieved were he to consistently follow his conscience. There is in

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<sup>10</sup>Baird's Notes, Lectures 110–111, 11th and 12th Apr 1780, vol. 7, fos 78v–79r, 80r–81r, 84r–v; cf. 83r–v; MS. 8/IV/9, fos 1v–2r.

<sup>11</sup>[Daniel Defoe], *The Life, and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, 9th ed., vol. 1 (London, 1747), pp. 80, 86, 197–198; cf. p. 208.



Defoe, then, a suggestion of a theory of the progress of reason and sentiment which was undoubtedly congenial to Reid's purposes. Reid would pick up this theme later in his lectures on jurisprudence, as I will show presently.

Having steered, via Defoe, a course between Hobbes and Rousseau, Reid enumerated the prudential motives that might induce reasonable men to enter into political society or persuade those already in such a society of their obligation to remain there. One advantage would derive from the richness and diversity of "Accommodations of the Body," i.e. food, clothing and shelter, made possible by the "division of Labour." Another would derive from the conduciveness of political society to a greater "advancement of knowledge", including political knowledge. "Savages", i.e. the indigenous peoples of the New World, Reid is reported to have said, may for example "acquire a great degree of cunning as we see from them also, a great degree of activity," but will not develop prudence. As we have seen, Reid was at pains to distinguish prudence — the virtuous adaptation of means to ends — from cunning, which was also adaptive, but derived from low motives. The advent of political society called forth for Reid a Ciceronian change in the degree of rationality and morals that is required of both governors and governed. A third advantage enjoyed by "Europeans" derived from the greater "Security of Property" their political society afforded, owing to the superior means available for redressing "private Injuries". In political society, Reid observed, men are "guarded by the Laws & by Judges." In an idiom reminiscent of Hume, he suggested that "These laws mark out to them a proper course of conduct & accustomed to be restrained by them they become creatures of a very different kind". A further advantage derived from the superior means political society offered for "defence against foreign enemies." Uniting in political society enabled men to raise an army and to acquire a "knowledge of the art of War", although standing armies brought with them their own problems according to republicans like Reid, as I have shown.

The fifth and sixth advantages which Reid considered to derive from political society were highly Ciceronian in character: it "furnishe[d] an occasion to employ the most exalted powers & capacities of a human Mind", and it gave men "room to exercise the most enlarged affections & the noblest Virtues." As it is a Ciceronian emphasis that gives Reid's lectures on politics their distinctive character, I shall give particular attention to these two points.

The savage who is concerned only with himself and a few friends has but a very "narrow sphere" in which to act and an extremely limited field of objects over which to



exercise his mind. In political society the powers of the mind are “more elevated” because men’s concerns “extend to a larger sphere of careful knowledge & the arts of active life.” Individuals in such a society consider it their “glory to raise [their] powers to the highest pitch”. Reid was quick to point out that men in a savage state were just as capable of exerting their mental powers to the full as their counterparts in civilized society, but wanted only the opportunity to do so. For Reid, who entertained Butlerian notions on this subject (as we have seen) there was no question of savages lacking the appropriate faculties and having to evolve them. As he put it:

We see even in a Savage tribe, where they unite in self defence, are conducted by a chosen leader of superior wisdom & prudence, & we often find these display an ability or stratagem which is a sufficient indication of th⟨eir⟩ being the same with other men, but so little opportunity have they of exercising this that they remain unimproved in their savage state.

Political society also provides an opportunity for the exercise of the “most Enlarged Affections and Noblest Virtues.” As Reid explained, the “Virtues of a Savage are commonly all exercised about their own self-preservation. They have no more extensive view as the object of their affections, perhaps they may extend to a few friends or associates but the situation of men in Society affords A larger sphere of action & exertion to his noblest power(s).” This passage underlines the Ciceronian concept of prudence as the virtuous use of our powers which Reid had articulated in his inaugural lecture at Glasgow College.

While these advantages “might ... & ought to induce” men who are sufficiently enlightened to prefer political society to the state of natural liberty, yet we “are not ... to suppose that a Savage could foresee all these, they arise gradually & could be known only in a succession of ages.” Such a remark is both stoical and sceptical: stoical because it suggests that prudence is a state of mind, i.e. dependent on self-consciousness; and sceptical in so far as it involves a retreat into historicism. It must also be remarked that once men have perceived these advantages — or enough of them to be induced to enter into political society — at least some will become conditions that must be fulfilled by governors in order to ensure continuing obedience on the part of the governed. As Reid put it in a subsequent passage in the lecture notes which he used from 1765–1766 onwards but seems to have been obliged to pass over in the 1779–1780 session,

The Political Union between Governours and Subjects, in what manner soever it might have begun or been continued must have the Nature and force of an Onerous Contract. The Obligations are mutual. And as the

Subjects are bound to Respect and honour those who are set over them to obey the Laws and to contribute their utmost endeavours to support the Government: So on the other hand those who are in the Government whether Kings or Senators Representatives of the people or Magistrates are under no less strict obligation in their several Stations to make the best laws they can devise for the preservation of Justice and for promoting the publick good, to execute those laws strictly and impartially, & to take the most prudent and Effectual means to defend their people from forreign Ennemies.

Reasoning *a priori* Reid regarded this as a corollary of his enumeration of the prudential motives that ought to induce those sufficiently enlightened to enter into civil society. Another such inference from these motives, one which Reid drew in 1779–1780 as well as in 1765–1766, 1768–1769 and 1775–1776, is as follows:

The End of All Political Government is to preserve the Rights and to promote the felicity of the Governed. The Prince who considers his Subjects as the tools of his Ambition, and who conceives that their Rights and their happiness may be Sacrificed to his Glory is a Tyrant. Those onely have the true Spirit of Government who conceive of their exalted Station as a Publick Trust, in the Execution whereof the common felicity of their Subjects ought to be their first care.

Here Reid combined a Ciceronian language of prudence, signalled by the word *glory*, with a post-Lockean language of contract, encapsulated in the term *public trust*.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.

The final stage in Reid's critique of Hume's science of politics and in the construction of his own political jurisprudence was his contribution to the ongoing debate on the contractual foundations of government. Reid had been exposed to this subject at least as early as 26 June 1759, when the Aberdeen Philosophical Society discussed Alexander Gerard's question "What is the origin of civil government?"<sup>13</sup> He himself opened a discussion of a related question, "Whether the Supposition of a tacit Contract at the beginning of Societies is well founded", at a meeting of the Glasgow Literary Society on 1 April 1768 and he touched upon the topic — probably with the same paper ready to hand that he used when he opened the discussion in the Glasgow

<sup>12</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 2r–v; Baird's Notes, Lecture 111, 12 Apr 1780, vol. 7, fos 81v–83v; cf. fos 81r, 85r; Monteath's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, p. 186; Jack's Notes from Reid's Lectures, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 116, 22 Apr 1776, pp. 628–630; *Works*, pp. 561b, 563a; Hume, *Essays*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Paul B. Wood, "Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher: A Study of Science and Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leeds, 1984), p. 377.

Literary Society — in his lectures on political jurisprudence in the 1768–1769 and 1775–1776 sessions. He also opened the discussion on a third question, “Wherein consists the nature of a Contract and does it involve Contradictions as Mr. Hume asserts”, in a meeting of the Glasgow Literary Society on 7 May 1779.<sup>14</sup>

First in the Glasgow Literary Society and then in the classroom, Reid began his remarks on the subject of tacit contracts by observing that the consent necessary to a contract need not be expressed by words, whether in writing or speech, but may be conveyed by sign language<sup>15</sup> or even by the silence of the parties, as in the case of an

<sup>14</sup>Entries for 1 Apr 1768 and 30 Apr 1779, in the Minute Book of the Glasgow College Literary Society, 1764–1779, Royal Faculty of Procurators Library MS. Hill 378.8, pp. 24, 119; cf. David Murray’s Copy of the Minute Book of the Literary Society of Glasgow, 1764–1779, GUL MS. Murray 505, pp. 27, 86; see also MS. 2/II/10, fo. 1r; Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, Lecture dated 14 Apr [1769], pp. 186–187; Jack’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1775–1776, Lectures 116–117, 22nd and 23rd Apr 1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, pp. 630–638.

<sup>15</sup>For Reid such implied contracts were grounded in human psychology. Reid excavated this ground in the account of natural language which he developed in two discourses delivered before the Aberdeen Philosophical Society on 15 March and 23 September 1760 and subsequently published in Chapters 4–6 of the *Inquiry*. As a moral philosopher Reid sought to explain and predict mental phenomena, and one of the chief means of investigating the mind was for him to attend to language or, more precisely, to the signs people use in order “to communicate their thoughts, purposes & desires to one another”. These signs, Reid considered, are either artificial, as in “The articulations of the voice” (i.e. words), whose meaning is established “by common consent”, or natural, i.e. “the modulations of the voice, the gestures of the body & the features of the face”, whose meaning is established “by nature” and understood or “discovered to us by a natural principle without reasoning or experience.” Artificial signs “speak to the understanding as Algebraical characters may do; but the passions the affections & the will [to which natural signs are addressed] hear them not.” These two sets of signs then make up natural and artificial language respectively. But if there were no natural language, artificial languages could never arise, “For all artificial language supposes some compact or agreement to affix a certain meaning to certain signs; there must therefore be compacts & agreements before the use of artificial signs: but there can be no compact or agreement without language; & therefore, there must be a natural language before any artificial language can be invented”. According to Reid, if two “Savages” who did not share a common artificial language were to meet, they would be able to communicate their intentions almost effortlessly by means of gesture, tone of voice, and so forth. By indulging overmuch in the refinements of their artificial languages “civilized” peoples have increasingly silenced their natural language and lost touch with basic interpretative instincts. (AUL MSS. 3107/1/5, fo. 14v; 3107/1/6, fo. 31r. These are Thomas Gordon’s copies of Reid’s 15 Mar and 23 Sept discourses respectively. Cf. R to Dr James Gregory, 26 Aug 1787, p. 71a: “The seed of language is the natural signs of our thoughts, which nature has taught all men to use, and all men to understand.” Reid’s interest in language apparently went back to about 1747–1748, i.e. about the time when he made the notes on Hume’s definition of the self which are discussed in Chapter 3. He read Pierre F.X. de Charlevoix’s *History of New France*, a work which evidently made a lasting impression on him (see R to Dr James Gregory, 26 Aug 1787, in *Works*, p. 71b). It was at least in part through a careful study of human language that Reid sought to trace the concepts of liberty and power and of the consciousness of self which were so crucial to his various attempts to answer the sceptics in the Aberdeen period and, increasingly, in the Glasgow period.) It must be emphasized that for Reid this was an intuitive ability, for, as he suggested in his abstract of Wise Club question 56, “Whether it is best that Courts of Law should be different from Courts of Equity, or that the same Courts whether subordinate or supreme should judge both according to Law and Equity”, discussed on 22 February 1763, “the common signs of human purposes and intentions ... cannot be reduced to rules” MS. 6/1/14, fo. 1v). Nevertheless, the “savage hath within him the seeds of the logician, the man of taste



elector called to a meeting to choose a Member of Parliament where there is “some rule that if any person has any objection he may speak & [his] silence ... is taken for a silent assent”. Where silence is taken as consent, the contract thus sealed is “commonly called a tacit Contract.” Occasionally the terms of a contract are “most minutely expressed so as to remove every doubt as far as is possible with regard to the obligations brought upon the several parties by it; But the nature of human affairs will not always admit of this caution & precision” and in most contracts the terms are not expressed but “implied in the very nature of the Transaction.”

Reid’s examples of tacit contracts are rich in Ciceronian associations. I quote the first, which shows how tacit duties are understood and accepted as part of the fabric of everyday life:

Thus I send for a Taylor I desire him to make me a suit of Cloaths of superfine Cloath of such a Colour; he takes my Measure makes a bow and walks off, under the same obligation as if by an Indenture stamped paper we had been mutually bound to each other, he to chuse the cloath according to his best skill[,] to cut it according to the fashion and the rules of his Art[,] to fit it to my size and shape[,] to furnish and make it up workmanlike & to charge a reasonable price, & I to pay him for it. This is all implied in the order I gave him though not a tittle of it be expressed.

A subsequent example is not cited in either set of student notes.<sup>16</sup> In this example Reid moves from our apprehension of implied obligations to the metaphysical underpinning of these obligations, i.e. to the moral constitution that gives rise to our expectations of what is owed to us in a given situation and which enjoins us to fulfil our end of the bargain. Although Reid does not employ the term *common sense* in this connection it is clear that the moral constitution we are talking about is a *commonsensical* one; in other words, it has definite affinities to the ethico-cognitive equipment or endowments of Reid’s man of common sense. His example in this case relates to the practice of medicine:

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and breeding, the orator, the statesman, the man of virtue, and the saint; which seeds, though planted in the mind by nature, yet, through want of culture and exercise, must lie for ever buried, and be hardly perceivable by himself or by others” (*Works*, p. 98b. There is something of an antecedent to this in the first of the two discourses we have been considering: if the use of speech and writing, which rely on artificial as opposed to natural signs, were abolished for a century, “Every man would then be a painter, an actor, & an orator” (AUL MS. 3107/1/5, fo. 15r). A version of this passage was subsequently incorporated into Chapter 4 of the *Inquiry* (*Works*, pp. 118b–119a)). Despite his own scepticism, Reid’s reference point in all of this was undoubtedly Hume’s discussion of justice as an artificial virtue, which, as I have pointed out, Reid was anxious to combat.

<sup>16</sup>I suspect this reflects not Reid’s omission of the passage but rather his pupils’ having passed over it in their highly abbreviated notes, for it dovetails nicely with the material that *is* presented there and subsequent passages follow with little loss of continuity.

I apply to a man who professes the healing Art[.] I tell him that I labour under such an ailment, & desire his advice. He prescribes for me without any more ado. It is evident that he comes under an obligation to prescribe for me according to the best of his skill, & I to pay him a reasonable fee though no such thing was expressed on the one hand or the other. The consent to this reciprocal Obligation is implied in the Nature of his Profession my application to him & his prescription for my health. It is not solely the Physicians Oath taken at his inauguration that binds him to the faithful discharge of the duty of a Physician; his taking upon him the Character virtually & implicitly binds him to this without Oath or Promise. He violates the contract implied in his profession, when he does not prescribe faithfully and honestly.

Here Reid exposed the mechanism by which moral obligations attach to a character or "office". In Reid's view, taking upon oneself any character or office in society "virtually & implicitly" puts one under such obligations: "He who claims the character of a Man binds himself to the duty of a Man, he who enlists in the Army binds himself to the duty of a Soldier, & he who takes the office of a General binds himself to do the duty of a General." As I have shown, for Reid taking upon oneself an appropriate character was a matter of prudence, which enabled a man to "make a right judgment of his own Talents that he may not put on a Person which Nature has not qualified him to act Nor attempt things beyond his Force." Prudence allowed one to recognize whether one was "fit to fabricate or govern a Commonwealth" or "onely to forge hob nails". In this can be seen the neo-Ciceronian etiquette of role-playing acted out on the pages of *The Spectator*, that common property of coffee-house culture.

In a further observation Reid progressed one step closer to spelling out the political ramifications of his neo-Ciceronian formula. The "more important" a given office is to the "well being & happiness of the human kind, so much the more Sacred are the Obligations to the duties of it." It was a small step from this injunction to a theory about the duty of a "King or Supreme Magistrate", who, "by taking that Office upon him voluntarily (and no man is forced into it) engages or contracts to do the duty of a king, that is to rule justly and equitably & to preserve the rights & promote the good and happiness of his people as far as lies in his power."<sup>17</sup> This statement does appear in the student notes.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup>MS. 2/II/10, fos 1v-2r; Monteath's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1768-1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, Lecture dated 14 Apr [1769], p. 186; Jack's Notes from Reid's Lectures, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 116, 22 Apr 1776, p. 630; cf. MS. 2/II/10, fos 3v-4r; *Practical Ethics*, pp. 128, 130. The notion of playing a part on the "stage of life" figures prominently in Reid's published writings. In the *Intellectual Powers*, Reid argued that effective role-playing was a function of becoming accustomed to the various "scenes of life", for "almost every station in civil society requires a multitude of regular trains of thought," i.e. a "versatility of imagination" whereby one is able to "[put] on the friend, the



A people by the authority they have invested in their king also put themselves under certain obligations to him, for just as the “Obligation of a King to the Duty of a King must necessarily commence from the time of his taking that Character upon him; so the Obligation of the people to subjection must commence from the time of their taking the Character of his Subjects.” But while they have invested their king with the authority to dispense justice at home and to defend them against foreign enemies, they must not be supposed to have thereby surrendered themselves utterly to him, but only to have “committed” certain powers to him. The more powers they have so committed to him, the “more sacredly bound to the right Exercise” of these powers has he in consequence become. In this Reid may be seen to assert the Ciceronian belief that with great power comes great responsibility. A post-Lockean component later becomes visible in his characterization of the obligations imposed upon the Decemvirs by the Roman people: “They were intrusted with unlimited Power for a certain purpose. The Nature of their Institution implied that they were to govern the Roman people justly untill they had framed and established a body of Laws and then to resign”. The Roman people had emphatically not therefore “given up their Liberty, they had onely committed it to the keeping of Persons whom they esteemed worthy of that Trust. And when they proved unworthy the Roman People wanted neither judgment to understand nor the Power and Spirit to vindicate their just Rights.” Here Reid made the transition from a people and their rulers taking upon themselves their respective characters to the concept of government as a sacred trust. The emphasis shifted accordingly from duties and obligations to liberty and rights. And as prudence directed one in the duties one might reasonably take upon oneself, so prudence served as a standard of how much to trust others and when to revoke one’s trust. As Reid put it, prudence “lead[s] us ... to know mankind among whom we live, that we may avoid the fatal Extremes of unreasonable distrust and suspicion of every man on the one hand, and of exposing our selves to the Arts of the crafty, by too great trust and security on the other.”

Reid identified the reciprocal obligations “implied” in the “Relation” between a people and their king thus described as an “Original Contract”. Similar contracts prescribing the respective duties of rulers and ruled could be supposed to underlie all other political constitutions, according to Reid. These onerous contracts confirmed the

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courtier, the patriot, the fine gentleman, with more ease than [one] put[s] off one suit and put[s] on another” (*Works*, pp. 384a, b; 620b).

<sup>18</sup>See Jack’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 116, 22 Apr 1776, pp. 630–631: “a king by voluntarily acting & taking the government upon him for no man is forced into it he lays himself under an obligation to act equitably & Justly upon all occasions.”

existence of a people's original liberty and therewith their rights against sovereigns who dared to encroach unduly upon it. Reid conceded that a people could forfeit their liberty only by expressly renouncing it in full consciousness of what they were doing. If a people "submit" to their king on the basis that "in his administration he is to have no Regard to Justice or Mercy any farther than he finds them answer his own Ends" (as happened in the case of Rehoboam, cited in such republican writings as Harrington's *Oceana* and Machiavelli's *Discourses*, and of Richard II, an example used by the mid-eighteenth-century Country opposition writer Bolingbroke) the original contract might thereby be presumed to be dissolved at least while that king reigns. But as early as 1764–1765 Reid had pointed out that even if all of a man's "ancestors from Adam had agreed to deprive him" of his right to resist incursions against his fundamental liberty he must not by these means be supposed to have lost his liberty, although it may indeed "put him in such circumstances as that it is not in his power to assert and vindicate his Right."<sup>19</sup> In this he followed in the tradition of those "republican writers" alluded to by Hume in the latter's essay "Of the Original Contract" (1748).<sup>20</sup> Short of a deliberate, temporary renunciation of their basic liberty, Reid argued,

A People have lost their liberty onely when they are either brought to believe that they have no Right to resist oppression, or when they have not power to resist it. While they do not believe in the Divine Right of Kings to Govern ... while they believe that their lives and Fortunes are onely deposited in the hands of the Magistrate for safe Custody, not given away to serve his pleasure and Ambition, they are free whatever the form of the Government may be; nothing but superior force can make them slaves. The Subjects of the great Mogul want nothing to make them free but to have their Minds enlightned and their Courage raised. The Mogul would then, notwithstanding the Absolute Nature of the Government, find himself bound by the Nature of his office and the Rights of his Subjects, and if he disregarded their Rights and Ruled tyrannically & oppressively he might justly be charged with breaking the Original Contract between him and his people.

According to Reid, King James II, though bound by the nature of his office and the rights of his subjects, "broke the Original Contract between King and People." Reid therefore took issue with Hume, who had argued in his essay "Of the Original Contract" that there was "no such thing as a Contract between King and People in

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<sup>19</sup> MSS. 2/II/10, fos 2r–4v; 4/III/9, fos 1v–2r; *Practical Ethics*, p. 133; cf. p. 130; Jack's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lectures 116–117, 22nd and 23rd Apr 1776, pp. 633, 636; see Knud Haakonssen, *Commentary on Practical Ethics*, p. 404, n. [6]; see also Monteath's Notes from Reid's Lectures, NCL MS. Box 32.3, Lecture dated 14 Apr [1769], p. 187; Jack's Notes, Lecture 116, pp. 631–632.

<sup>20</sup>Hume, *Essays*, p. 471.

these Ages". Reid's criticism of Hume is revealing, for it shows just how fearful he was that the tendency of Hume's political scepticism on this issue was to undermine the very stability which Hume set so much store by. His own position may be seen to be an ideologically motivated attempt to shore up the polite, neo-Ciceronian foundations of political obligation and to commend the Revolution of 1688. I therefore quote him in full on this point:

The Sentiments which M<sup>r</sup> Hume has on many occasions expressed of the claims of the house of Stuart, & of the Conduct of those who opposed their pretensions; make it less surprizing that he should oppose a principle upon which those who brought about the revolution justified their Conduct. If the Lords & Commons who found the throne to be vacant upon this ground among others that King James had broke the Original Contract between King and People acted upon chimerical Principles they are not to be justified and we ought either to condemn the Revolution altogether, or justify it upon different Principles. But if on the other hand this Notion of a Contract between King and People has a Meaning, & a meaning consistent with the Principles of Justice and Equity why should it be traduced as chimerical & Visionary by those who have no intention to throw a Reproach upon the Revolution.<sup>21</sup>

In the student notes Reid accused Hume of paying "no attention to the Contract between various persons", i.e. the acts by which people of every rank have taken upon themselves a character to which rights and duties are attached.<sup>22</sup> He observed that the

Contract of a petty Constable to perform the office of a petty Constable is as evident as can be & the Contract that a king makes is as strong as real as this can be so that M<sup>r</sup> Hume seems to have set out upon wrong principles as it is surely very far Contrary to the nature of things to say that [there is no such thing as] a Contract between a king & a subject, the supreme Magistrate seems to be really Bound by the laws of nature (to) dispense Justice to keep by the laws of the particular Constitution to do every thing that tends to the happiness of his subjects sin(ce) this is rational & what must be Indispensably bound up (with) the supreme magistrate on the other hand the subjects ar(e) bound down by their near connection to submit to every lawful design of the king to obey his orders in what is reasonable surely without the mutual obedience of bodies there could be no government carried on as this is the handle upon which all government turns.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>MS. 2/II/10, fos 2v-3r; cf. Hume, *Essays*, p. 473; Monteath's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1768-1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, Lecture dated 14 Apr [1769], p. 187; Jack's Notes from Reid's Lectures, 1775-1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lecture 117, 23 Apr [1776], p. 636.

<sup>22</sup>Jack's Notes, Lecture 116, 22 Apr 1776, p. 633.

<sup>23</sup>Jack's Notes, Lecture 116, pp. 633-634; cf. Hume, *Essays*, p. 467.

In this Reid echoed Locke, who wrote in his *Second Treatise* that

exceeding the Bounds of Authority is no more a Right in a great, than a petty Officer; no more justifiable in a King than a Constable. But is so much the worse in him in that he has more trust put in him, has already a much greater share than the rest of his brethren, and is supposed from the advantages of Education, imployment and Counsellors to be more knowing in the measure of right or wrong.<sup>24</sup>

Hume denied that any such contract lay at the centre of government. He acknowledged that our "Obligation to allegiance has the same foundation as our obligation to be faithfull to our promises" but did not accept that the moral expectation of keeping one's promises was the hinge upon which society, any more than government, turned. These associations owed their very existence to prudential calculations and were sustained by habitual obedience rather than a web of more or less self-conscious mutual trust. Reid showed no sympathy for this side of Hume's argument, insisting in a rather flat-footed manner that there would be "no living in Society without fidelity to promises" and suggesting that "For the same Reason we are bound to submit to Government." He simply could not shake his Ciceronian bias, according to which virtue is prior to prudence or, rather, subsumes it. Indeed, virtually the only points on which the two philosophers agreed in their respective analyses were that political obligation involved an "Act of Mind" and that we may "trace" the "charter of our liberties" in the "nature of man".<sup>25</sup>

In another place in the student notes Reid is reported to have said that "it is evident that those who govern should always act equitably & do to the utmost of their power to keep up the original Intention of government which is to make the subjects the most happy[. O]n the other hand it seems very reasonable that those who are subjects should act with all the Allegiance possible to their sovereigns", for a "submittance to the law of our Country is absolutely necessary for the keeping up that government." By arguing from the nature of things Reid was appealing to an a priori rational standard, and in asserting the contractual, i.e. consensual, basis of the entire social and political order he was aligning himself with Whig theorists like Locke. For Reid, both the existence and the obligatoriness of every link in this great chain of contracts were rationally self-evident — in other words, backed up by common sense. So "evident in the Constitution of our Country & government" is the contract between a people and their king Reid is also reported to have said, "that it is renewed every time

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<sup>24</sup>Locke, *Two Treatises*, ed. Laslett, 2nd ed., p. 419.

<sup>25</sup>Hume, *Essays*, p. 468; MS. 2/II/10, fo. 4v; cf. Hume, *Essays*, p. 470; see also pp. 479–481.



that addressees are made unto the king[.] Thus we see the subject making all the protestations of keeping by his majesty of giving him all the assistance he can of giving obedience to the laws of his Country & the king on his part protests that he will endeavour to make the happiness of his people his particular study to keep continually by the law of his Country & not to swerve from them.”<sup>26</sup>

For Reid, then, the “measure of political society” was the extent to which a given form of government actually preserved the rights and promoted the felicity of the governed. It followed that the “most Important question In political Jurisprudence is whether when governments become contrary to the public good whether they may be thrown of(f).”<sup>27</sup> Even where a given sovereign’s powers are not circumscribed by the letter of a constitution, his authority is “still limited to things that may be lawfully done or that have no inherent turpitude in them & to things that are not destructive to the Society”; the law of nature, whose terms are implied in the original contract between a king and his subjects and which is anyhow of higher authority, does not authorize such actions.<sup>28</sup> Reid was quite emphatic on this point: should a sovereign “command us to do any thing w<sup>c</sup> is base, we ought rather to obey God y<sup>n</sup> Man”. He regarded as “very absurd” and “not worth confuting” the doctrine of Hobbes, whom he characterized as a “corruptor” rather than an “improver” of jurisprudence, that a subject “must do w<sup>e</sup>ver the Sovereign commands”. Reid probably held a similar view of the Scots jurist William Barclay, who also defended absolutism. It is simply not “possible” for a Christian to carry out certain orders. In this connection Reid cited the example of Orte, the Governor of Bayonne, who when he received orders from Charles IX of France to massacre all the Huguenots in Paris refused to execute those orders, begging the King to “order him to do things possible.”<sup>29</sup> On this issue Reid was inclined to side with Grotius, who while favouring non-resistance as a general policy approved of resistance in cases where the “prince leads to the ruine of the subjects”. Thus it was “lawful for David to resist the persecution of Saul. & it was

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<sup>26</sup>Jack’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1775–1776, GUL MS. Gen. 118, Lectures 116–117, 22nd and 23rd Apr 1776, pp. 634–637; cf. Monteath’s Notes from Reid’s Lectures, 1768–1769, NCL MS. Box 32.3, Lecture dated 14 Apr [1769], p. 187.

<sup>27</sup>Monteath’s Notes, Lecture dated 14 Apr [1769], p. 187; Jack’s Notes, Lecture 117, 23 Apr [1776], p. 637.

<sup>28</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3r.

<sup>29</sup>Monteath’s Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], pp. 188–189; cf. MSS. 4/III/23, fo. 2r; 8/IV/9, fo. 3r; Jack’s Notes, Lecture 117, 23 Apr [1776], pp. 639–640; cf. MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v.



lawful for the Maccabees to oppose the princes then opposing & oppressing the Jews.”<sup>30</sup>

The question of resistance was keenly debated in England by philosophers and theologians after the accession of James I. The patriarchalism of Robert Filmer was countered by the republican Algernon Sidney and the Whig theorists John Locke and Bishop Benjamin Hoadly. The non-juror Charles Leslie later reasserted Filmerian patriarchalism, while the High Tory divine Bishop Francis Atterbury attacked “all forms of contract-based and rights-based resistance theory.” Hoadly in turn criticized the passive obedience teaching of Atterbury.<sup>31</sup> Reid had a qualified sympathy for members of the “Sect” of “high flyers” in England, namely Sidney, Locke and Hoadly, who despite the fact that they “preached up” the “doctrine of unlimited submission” in strenuous terms, still “allowed that where the destruction of a state is inevitable or where our rights & Liberties are extremely violated ... resistance is lawfull.”<sup>32</sup> He wondered why when they admitted that resistance was lawful in such cases they continued to “reason upon none resistance because surely no person will be so hurtful to his own ... [interest] where it is not necessary.”<sup>33</sup> Reid was sharply critical of the tendency of high flyer doctrine to encourage King James II in his mistaken belief that he “could change both the form of government & make it absolute beside(s) introduc(ing) popery”.<sup>34</sup> But he himself regarded the revolution of 1688 as “not onely Lawfull but laudable & glorious”, for James II “had brok(en) the contract betwixt King & people” and as his “Aim was arbitrary government” resistance in this instance was “necessary to save [the] Nation from tyranny”.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Jack’s Notes, Lecture 117, pp. 642–643; cf. AUL MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v; Monteath’s Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], p. 189.

<sup>31</sup>Knud Haakonssen, Commentary on *Practical Ethics*, p. 416, n. [14].

<sup>32</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v; Monteath’s Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], pp. 188–189; Jack’s Notes, Lecture 117, p. 643.

<sup>33</sup>Jack’s Notes, Lecture 117, pp. 643–644.

<sup>34</sup>Monteath’s Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], p. 190; cf. pp. 188–189.

<sup>35</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v; Monteath’s Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], p. 190; Jack’s Notes, Lecture 117, p. 638. As the following paraphrase from Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* which he made in the 1758–1759 session shows, Reid endorsed the latter’s view that “Reason and Philosophy teach us that Kings are the Servants of the People & it prescribes limits to our obedience and Submission to them according to the Laws of the Land & teaches us even to resist & oppose them when the publick Safety makes it necessary. But Nature teaches us to Submit to them for their own Sake to tremble and bow down before their exalted Station, to regard their Smile as a reward sufficient to compensate Services, and to dread their displeasure, tho no other evil was to follow it as the Severest of all Mortifications” (MS. 3/I/27, fo. 2v; cf. *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1759), pp. 115–116; Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, ed. J.C. Bryce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 124 (“There is in human Nature a Servility which inclines us to adore our Superiors”), 174). But despite

Reid finished his treatment of this topic by adding the proviso that no resistance should be made if the “Evils arising from Resistance [are] greater than those that arise from Suffering” or, as he told his pupils in the 1768–1769 session, revolution is unjustified “except when it tends to the good of almost [the] whole community”. He was quick to point out that “This Doctrine does not encourage Rebellion, [or] tend to disturb Government”, although at the same time he rather suspected that “none resistance encourages Tyranny & despotism.”<sup>36</sup> In this connection he praised Socrates, who refused to escape from jail even “tho he knew his Sentence to be unjust,” because he did not wish to jeopardize the principle that a “Man of his Character ... ought not to disregard the laws of his Country.”<sup>37</sup> So Reid ended his lectures on political jurisprudence the same note with which he began, i.e. a neo-Ciceronian regard to character with its attendant rights and duties couched in the idiom of post-Lockean contractualism and firmly anchored in common sense or common prudence.

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his concession on the power of servile habit, Reid staunchly believed that the weight of common sense or common prudence would be sufficient to redress the balance of nature.

<sup>36</sup>MS. 8/IV/9, fo. 3v; Monteath's Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], p. 189; Jack's Notes, Lecture 117, p. 642; cf. Jack's Notes, Lecture 118, 24 Apr [1776], pp. 644–645.

<sup>37</sup>Monteath's Notes, Lecture dated 17 Apr [1769], p. 189; cf. *Practical Ethics*, pp. 169, 177 (“As men may suffer hardships and injuries under the best Government from iniquity of witnesses or of Judges these ought to be patiently born. This is a Sacrifice to the publick weal. Socrates Conduct Noble and worthy of the Prince of Philosophers”).

## Epilogue

In the Prologue I observed that while Reid devoted major attention to pneumatology and ethics in his two great works of the 1780s, he did not work up his classroom reflections on politics nearly to the same extent. Indeed, to scholars unfamiliar with Reid's manuscripts, it has always appeared that Reid devoted no space whatever to politics in his last books. Yet upon examining the manuscript evidence and collating it with the published record one discovers that politics was never very far from Reid's mind as he worked up his reflections on the first two parts of his course and that he managed to incorporate a large number of references to politics in both the *Intellectual Powers* and the *Active Powers*. I shall examine a few of these references here in order to show how Reid translated his pedagogical agenda into print.

Perhaps the most striking of these references were to the "fundamental principles of ... politics," which, in kinship with Shaftesbury, Reid described as "dictates of common sense". Reid reduced these "common principles of human nature" about which he had so much to say in his lectures on politics to the following formula, which he repeated or enlarged upon no fewer than six times in the books he published in the 1780s:

It may always be expected that [our fellow-men] will regard their own interest and reputation, and that of their families and friends; that they will repel injuries, and have some sense of good offices; and that they will have some regard to truth and justice, so far at least as not to swerve from them without temptation.<sup>1</sup>

Our tendency to "regulate" our actions by such principles not only makes us "capable of living in society, and uniting in a political body under government" but also makes a science of politics possible. As Reid put it,

Such maxims with regard to human conduct, are the foundation of all political reasoning, and of common prudence in the conduct of life. Hardly can a man form any project in public or in private life, which does not depend upon the conduct of other men, as well as his own, and which does not go upon the supposition that men will act such a part in such circumstances.

Be that as it may, political science remained a science of probabilities. Thus, just as he had done in his lectures on politics, Reid made important concessions to the sceptics. "[Political] reasoning is never demonstrative", he wrote, "but it may have a very great degree of probability, especially when applied to great bodies of men." Troublesome uncertainty was a function of the behaviour of individuals, for as Reid admitted, "The

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<sup>1</sup> *Works*, pp. 424a, 451a; cf. pp. 483b, 562a–b, 577a, 636b, 654b.

best concerted project may fail, and wise counsels may be frustrated, because some individual acted a part which it would have been against all reason to expect.”<sup>2</sup> But even this uncertainty was not to be overestimated, for as Reid shrewdly observed, “If man were either a more perfect or a more imperfect, a better or a worse, creature than he is, politics would be a different science from what it is.”<sup>3</sup> Reid’s point was that there is at least a “certain degree of prudence and probity [on] which we [can] rely in every man that is not insane” and which forms the groundwork both of political society and of political science, for it is on the assumption that people are generally prudent and honest that we “reason concerning the causes and effects of different forms of government, laws, customs, and manners.” That is to say, assuming that people have common sense and are usually virtuous, we may “conclude what part [they] will act in different situations and circumstances.” Although Reid employed the Machiavellian rhetoric of taking people as they are rather than as they ought to be, it is clear that he included common sense and common honesty in his reckoning of the way people are.<sup>4</sup>

It will be recalled that this prudence-and-honesty formula was itself part of a larger equation in Reid’s introductory lectures on politics, which included his account of free will and necessity. In his lectures Reid felt compelled to respond to necessitarians like Hume and Kames who believed that human actions were necessarily determined by the strongest motive and who equated acting freely with acting capriciously. According to Hume, only on the supposition that our actions were determined by the strongest motive could politics be reduced to a science. Reid replied that the same motive does not always produce the same action among different people and that even in the same person it does not always produce the same effect. He observed, moreover, that there was no standard by which the strength of a given motive could be judged. Given these circumstances Reid concluded that according to their own principles necessitarians could not hope to establish a political science. Moreover, in order to demonstrate that liberty was not equivalent to capriciousness, he pointed out that a good person will act a good part be it ever so much in his power to act a bad one.

In the *Active Powers*, Reid enlarged upon his discussion of these points. He emphasized that in addition to “animal motives”, which human beings have in common with brutes, there are also “rational motives,” which are peculiar to human

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<sup>2</sup>*Works*, pp. 451a, 483b.

<sup>3</sup>*Works*, p. 591b.

<sup>4</sup>*Works*, pp. 483a, 591b; cf. pp. 451a, 481a.

beings. He also distinguished between two measures of the relative strength of motives. The first, i.e. the “animal test”, measures the relative irresistibility of a given passion or appetite. The second, i.e. the “rational test,” measures the obligatoriness of a certain course of action in point of duty or of “real happiness”. Typically, those motives which are strongest when judged by the animal test are weakest when judged by the rational test and vice versa. Human life may be characterized as a “state of trial” precisely because our passions and appetites very often push us one way while our reason pulls us in the opposite direction. In this contest, our reason sometimes prevails over our passions and appetites and sometimes our passions and appetites supplant our reason. Far from being determined by the strongest animal motive, then, human beings frequently choose to act on the strongest rational motive. When they do so, their actions are truly free, not capricious. This freedom, expressed in the observation that “Rational beings, in proportion as they are wise and good, ... act according to the best motives”, provides the foundation for political science. Thus when Reid championed the doctrine of free will in opposition to Hume’s doctrine of necessity, he had in mind not capriciousness, which he probably regarded as no less compulsive than animal necessity, but rational or “moral liberty,” which, like animal necessity, had the virtue of being predictable.<sup>5</sup>

And it was here, at the heart of his account of moral liberty in the *Active Powers*, that Reid placed his reflections on political jurisprudence. Despotism precluded virtue because it “prescribe[d] laws to [persons] which they [had] not the power to obey ... [and] require[d] ... service[s] beyond their power”. For the same reason, it constituted “injustice in the highest degree” because the principles upon which it trampled, i.e. “That a man cannot be under an obligation to what is impossible; that he cannot be criminal in yielding to necessity, nor justly punished for what he could not avoid,” were for Reid “fundamental rules of justice” which “ought never to be violated.” They are indeed recognized as such in all “equitable civil governments” and in general are “so evident to all men, that the most tyrannical governments profess to be guided by them, and endeavour to palliate what is contrary to them by the plea of necessity.” Civil government, Reid suggested, is “a species of moral government” and it is to the standard of moral government that all civil governments ought to aspire. The fact that so many regimes miss the mark may be a function of human imperfection — “unwise or unjust” laws or “partial or unskilful” judges — but the means of their

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<sup>5</sup>*Works*, pp. 609a, 611b; 612a, b.



reform lies in the proper application of human power and in the encouragement of virtue, i.e. in our perfectibility.<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, I would like to give some account of Reid's "Thoughts on the Utopian System," a twenty-seven page paper which Reid read before the Glasgow Literary Society on 28 November 1794.<sup>7</sup> In this paper Reid drew together the key themes of his political jurisprudence, notably a circumspect attitude towards the possibility (and the justice) of revolutionary change, a more sanguine view of the ability to reform a constitution, and an underlying faith in human perfectibility. In his remarks on the possibility of revolutionary change, Reid reiterated the Montesquieuian myth of the wise legislator and exercised a Montesquieuian scepticism with regard to the "political knowledge" of the many: "a good Model of Government can never, all at once, be invented by a Multitude, of which the greater part is ignorant, & of the knowing, the greater part is led by Interest or by Ambition." He also harboured a Humean (and anti-Montesquieuian) suspicion that the stability of a government depended largely on its "Customs & Manners by which [a people] & [their] Forefathers for many Generations have been governed" rather than on the "Climate or ... any peculiarity in the Genius of the People". Reid's doubtfulness about the possibility of "violent & sudden Changes of the Form of Government" largely arose, therefore, from the observation that

The practical Politician, who is to Model or to direct the Government of a Nation actually existing, has to do with Men who are not in the State of Nature, but who by Education & by the State of Society in which they live have acquired Habits & Dispositions, which it is not in his Power to eradicate, and which may be called a second Nature. To this second Nature as well as to the first his Principles of Government must be adapted.

In his reflections on reforming constitutions, Reid repeated the formula he found in Penn that "New Laws and Ordinances wisely contrived may remedy the Defects of a Constitution, remove grievances, and promote general happiness." At the same time, he sceptically conceded that

so limited is the Wisdom of Man, so short his Foresight, that new Laws, even when made with the best intention, do not always produce the Effect intended and expected from them, or they bring unforeseen inconveniences that do more than counterballance their good Effects.

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<sup>6</sup>*Works*, pp. 613b, 614b.

<sup>7</sup>An abbreviated version of this paper was published in the *Glasgow Courier* a few months later, on 18 December 1794, under the title "Danger of Political Innovation." It was subsequently reprinted, first in Robert Cleghorn's *Sketch of the Character of the Late Thomas Reid* (1796), and then as Appendix 2 to Archibald Arthur's *Discourses on Theological & Literary Subjects* (1803). The full text was printed as Section 18 in *Practical Ethics*.

Be that as it may, Reid remained dedicated to the principle of reform and sought to inform that principle by engaging in certain utopian speculations with a view not only to “enlarg[ing] our Conceptions & ... strengthen[ing] our Faculties” but also to “influenc[ing] ... practice.” Central to Reid’s political speculation was a doctrine of human perfectibility according to which man is

a Being who brings into the World with him the Seeds of Reason and Conscience, along with various Appetites and Passions, by which he is often missled into Error, and seduced into wrong Conduct by Temptations that arise from within, or from external circumstances: At the same time capable of a high Degree of Improvement in Knowledge & Virtue, by right Education and good Government; and on the other hand, of great Degeneracy, to Barbarity & even to Brutality, by the Want or the Corruption of these Means.

Such a view of human nature led easily into a More-inspired utopian policy, whose aristocracy of virtue and community of property evidently appealed to Reid. The abolition of private property would greatly reduce temptation and the public recognition of virtue would ensure the release of free will and the proper development of people’s moral and intellectual powers, thus producing good citizens in this world and preparing the way for happiness in the hereafter. Only in this way, Reid suggested, could “that Perfection and Happiness of Society which every good Man desires” be achieved.

But despite his apparent enthusiasm for utopian policy, Reid deepened the political scepticism of the *Intellectual Powers* by suggesting that the actions of great bodies of men no less than that of individuals may be unpredictable:

political Reasoning is not of the Demonstrative but of the probable kind. The Heart of Man is a Labrinth, too intricate to be fully traced by his Understanding, and we often see, not onely Individuals, but great Bodies of Men act a part very different from that which by the common principles of human Nature we would have expected.

Reid was also critical of utopian policy because it left little room for the exercise of the “noble Virtues” of fortitude and liberality, the opportunities to practise which were more prevalent under a system of private property. He was also worried that “the consistent pursuit of Honour & of the Esteem of Men” might actually “supplant the Virtue which it ought onely to Aid.” In other words, acting exclusively from these motives may close the soul to such higher motives as doing one’s duty for its own sake or because one knows that it is good, and consistent with God’s will, to be virtuous. One may, in consequence, lose one’s “Sense of ... Dependence and Demerit,” i.e. one’s awareness of one’s “Imperfections”. The arrogance that takes the place of this humility is destructive of religion and liberty, which were the final arbiters of Reid’s full-blown political jurisprudence just as they had been the starting-

points of the political science he had begun to develop in the classroom, first at Aberdeen and then at Glasgow.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>AUL MS. 3061/6, pp. 2, 3, 4, 5–6, 15, 25, 26, 27.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Reconstructing Reid's Lectures on Politics

Among the manuscripts sorted through by Reid's colleague, the professor of logic, George Jardine, shortly after Reid's death was a folder marked "Politicks" in Reid's hand. The folder contained various lecture notes on politics,<sup>1</sup> assorted reading notes,<sup>2</sup> portions of Reid's lecture notes on jurisprudence closely related to politics,<sup>3</sup> a draft of a portion of his *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* relating to natural rights,<sup>4</sup> and an *aide-mémoire* reporting a conversation with Adam Smith.<sup>5</sup> Jardine bundled up this folder with a large number of other MSS and placed them in a wrapper which he labelled "Heads of Lectures on Pneumatology, Ethicks & Politicks which seem to have been delivered the first Session Dr Reid Taught in Glasgow College."<sup>6</sup> With this bundle, but included in the politics folder, were three additional MSS; these were a set of reading notes<sup>7</sup> and two lecture notes on politics.<sup>8</sup> The MSS were organized in this way when Alex Liddell and David Fate Norton catalogued them in 1958 and 1977 respectively. The three "additional" MSS were subsequently inserted in the politics folder. At present, only MSS. 4/III/12–23c are enclosed in this folder, evidently for reasons of archival convenience. The materials which I have transcribed and edited as Reid's lectures on politics in Appendix 4 are AUL MSS. 4/III/1–3, 5–11, 14–16.

1.

I now record basic descriptions of all of the papers which belong with the folder labelled "Politicks":

- MS. 4/III/1: 2 fols, 19.9 cm long × 16.1 cm wide,<sup>9</sup> fol. 2v blank.
- MS. 4/III/2: 4 fols, 20.0 cm × 16.1 cm, fols 2v–4v blank.

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<sup>1</sup>MSS. 4/III/1–3, 5–10, 14, 16.

<sup>2</sup>MSS. 4/III/12–13, 19–22, 23b–c.

<sup>3</sup>MSS. 4/III/4, 17.

<sup>4</sup>MS. 4/III/18.

<sup>5</sup>MS. 4/III/23a.

<sup>6</sup>In Box 2131.5.

<sup>7</sup>MS. 4/III/23.

<sup>8</sup>MS. 4/III/11, 15.

<sup>9</sup>In subsequent references, I have stated the dimensions of individual manuscripts in the form L × W and have rounded all figures up to the nearest mm.



- MS. 4/III/3: two “signatures,” Signature 1, 4 fols, 20.8 cm × 16.1 cm, fols 3v–4v blank; Signature 2, 4 fols, 19.4 cm × 15.9 cm, fols 6r, 7r–8v blank.
- MS. 4/III/4: 2 fols, 19.4 cm × 15.6 cm.
- MS. 4/III/5: 6 fols, 19.3 cm × 15.2 cm, fols 4–5 uncut, fols 3v–6v blank.
- MS. 4/III/6: 4 fols, 19.7 cm × 15.8 cm, fols 2v–3v blank.
- MS. 4/III/7: 1 fo., 19.4 cm × 14.4 cm.
- MS. 4/III/8: 2 fols, 19.1 cm × 15.6 cm, fo. 1v blank.
- MS. 4/III/9: 4 fols, 18.9 cm × 15.4 cm, fols 3v–4v blank.
- MS. 4/III/10: 4 fols, 19.3 cm × 15.5 cm, fols 3–4 uncut, fols 2v–4v blank.
- MS. 4/III/11: 2 fols, 19.8 cm × 16.1 cm.
- MS. 4/III/12: 4 fols, 18.5 cm × 15.5 cm, fols 1–2, 3–4 uncut, fols 1v–4v blank.
- MS. 4/III/13: 4 fols, 20.6 cm × 16.3 cm, fols 1–2, 3–4 uncut, fols 1v–4v blank.
- MS. 4/III/14: 2 fols, 19.8 cm × 15.8 cm.
- MS. 4/III/15: 4 fols, 19.2 cm × 15.6 cm.
- MS. 4/III/16: 1 fo., 16.5 cm × 10.1 cm.
- MS. 4/III/17: 3 fols, 20.8 cm × 16.6 cm, fo. 2v blank.
- MS. 4/III/18: 2 fols, 19.0 cm × 15.4 cm.
- MS. 4/III/19: 1 fo., 18.5 cm × 15.1 cm.
- MS. 4/III/20: 4 fols, 18.5 cm × 15.0 cm, fols 1–2, 3–4 uncut, fols 1v–4v blank.
- MS. 4/III/21: 4 fols, 20.1 cm × 16.0 cm.
- MS. 4/III/22: 2 fols, 19.3 cm × 15.5 cm, fols 1v–2v blank.
- MS. 4/III/23: 2 fols, 18.6 cm × 15.4 cm, fo. 2r–v blank.
- MS. 4/III/23a: 1 fo., 20.0 cm × 16.3 cm.
- MS. 4/III/23b: 4 fols, 18.6 cm × 15.4 cm, fols 1–2, 3–4 uncut, fols 1v–4v blank.
- MS. 4/III/23c: 2 fols, 20.7 cm × 16.6 cm.

## 2.

Considering now only those papers which are lecture notes on politics, one is confronted by the following problem. The order in which the papers happen to have been preserved would appear not to have been the order in which Reid used them in his lectures, for in their present arrangement they do not form a coherent whole. Moreover, as George Jardine observed, while these papers seem to have formed the core of Reid’s lectures on politics in the first year he taught at Glasgow, “so many additional notes and illustrations have been made in succeeding years that they cannot

easily be put in exact order.”<sup>10</sup> These things being so, it was difficult but not impossible to restore the papers to their original order. I shall now explain how I have reconstructed Reid’s lectures on politics.

Consecutively dated material provided the starting-point for my reconstruction of Reid’s text. Reid’s use of preview<sup>11</sup> and recapitulation<sup>12</sup> provided forward and backward linkages which aided me at the second stage of this process. Where dates were lacking, Reid’s undated list of “Heads of Lectures on Politicks” in MS. 4/III/1<sup>13</sup> provided additional clues as to the rearrangement of the MSS in the next stage and for the most part corroborated the order dictated by consecutively dated material. The order thus established was substantially corroborated by the order observed in surviving student notes relating to politics deriving from Reid’s lectures in the 1768–1769, 1775–1776 and 1779–1780 sessions. I shall have more to say about Baird and the importance of student notes in Appendix 2.

It should be pointed out that the various pieces of text that have been rearranged according to these principles are largely discrete papers. Only in a small number of cases have I broken up individual papers but even then I have only rearranged the text where there were no apparent connections between pieces of text that could otherwise stand alone, where no logical gap would be created by removing a block of text and replacing it in a more sensible position, and where the rearrangement was consistent with the result obtained on the one hand by triangulating between evidence supplied by dates, by Reid’s list of lecture heads and by his use of preview and recapitulation and on the other by comparing Reid’s notes with those made by his students. The result is a text that leaves nothing of Reid’s out but follows the argument from beginning to end, sticking to Reid’s original outline but changing course when he does (as indicated by the dates on his papers).

### 3.

One final point remains to be made. In so far as it has been possible for me to determine Reid’s final intention from MSS in his own hand, it is this version of the text that I have reproduced in the main body of the transcription, relegating superseded

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<sup>10</sup>In Box 2131.5.

<sup>11</sup>See MSS. 4/III/2, fo. 2r; 4/III/5, fo. 2v; 4/III/9, fo. 3r; 4/III/10, fo. 2r.

<sup>12</sup>Examples of this practice may be found in MSS 4/III/2, fo. 1r; 4/III/5, fo. 1r; 4/III/6, fo. 2r; 4/III/8, fo. 1r.; 4/III/9, fo. 2v; 4/III/10, fo. 1r. On one occasion, Reid’s “summary” at the beginning of a new manuscript is little more than a list of headings with the odd point-form note thrown in to fill it out (see MS. 4/III/11, fo. 1r).

<sup>13</sup>On fo. 2r.

material to the footnotes. I have provided a full statement of the principles governing my transcription in Appendix 3.

## Appendix 2

### The Importance of Contemporary Reports

In the course of my research I have made some important archival discoveries directly relevant to this thesis. One of these — i.e. my recovery of the original MSS of Reid's letters to Drs Andrew and David Skene, which had been known only in their abridged, published form — is fully reported in the article appended to this thesis. In this appendix I propose to report three other discoveries.

1.

In the winter of 1991 I identified the George Baird whose 8-volume set of notes from Reid's moral philosophy lectures, 1779–1780, has long been known to Reid scholars, as George Husband Baird (1761–1840), who went on to become principal of Edinburgh University (1793–1840). I was able to make this positive identification by comparing Baird's signature on the title page of Vol. 7 of his notes with his signatures of 1782 and 1785 on the matriculation roll of Edinburgh University,<sup>1</sup> with his signatures of 18 April, 29 April and 6 December 1783 and 4 January 1785<sup>2</sup> and with signatures on his letters to Charles Stewart of 24 January 1798 and 24 April 1804 and to John Campbell of 8 March 1802.<sup>3</sup>

George Husband Baird seems to have had certain Moderate sympathies and it is tempting to think that he acquired these while studying under Reid. Baird's notes provide a very full picture of Reid's course and his notes from Reid's lectures on forms of government (i.e. the first half of his lectures on politics) were an invaluable aid to my understanding of the lecture notes in Reid's own hand, as the numerous references to ML MS. A104929 amply demonstrate. These politics notes have never before been systematically transcribed, no doubt because of the disheartening difficulty of interpreting Baird's all-but-illegible script.

2.

In the fall of 1991, while examining the papers of Reid's teaching assistant and hand-picked successor, Archibald Arthur, I discovered an uncatalogued booklet containing

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<sup>1</sup>Edinburgh University Archives MS. Da 35.

<sup>2</sup>EUL MSS. Da.2.15, 17.

<sup>3</sup>In EUL MSS. La.III.353 and La.II.110.

notes from Reid's lectures on jurisprudence, 1765. This hitherto unknown set of notes, which appears to have been written by Arthur, provides a unique glimpse into Reid's views at an early stage of his encounter with Adam Smith.

3.

In the summer of 1992 I discovered a hitherto unknown set of student notes from Reid's moral philosophy lectures, 1768–1769. This set of notes, in the hand of John Monteath (?1753–1843), is the only one that contains notes relating to Reid's lectures on police, i.e. the second half of his lectures on politics. Monteath's notes are especially useful for the numerous texts and authors cited. Monteath matriculated at Glasgow in 1765.

4.

The student notes provide historical snapshots of Reid's course and help not only to confirm the order of Reid's text but also to date certain additions and corrections which Reid made to his own notes. Moreover, Baird's notes from the 1779–1780 session confirm the pertinence of MS. 4/III/20 (on the government of Venice) to the lectures on politics.<sup>4</sup> They also furnish one with evidence of Reid's lecturing style. Dugald Stewart, who by his own account attended Reid's lectures for a "considerable part of the winter of 1772," reported that

In his elocution and mode of instruction, there was nothing peculiarly attractive. He seldom, if ever, indulged himself in the warmth of extempore discourse; nor was his manner of reading calculated to increase the effect of what he had committed to writing. Such, however, was the simplicity and perspicuity of his style, such the gravity and authority of his character, and such the general interest of his young hearers in the doctrines which he taught, that, by the numerous audiences to which his instructions were addressed, he was heard uniformly with the most silent and respectful attention.<sup>5</sup>

In this Reid differed from both Smith and John Millar, who were far more extemporary in their delivery. According to Francis Jeffrey, Millar "wrote his lectures, or had the heads of them, at least, in his book; but he seldom looked at it, and

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<sup>4</sup>See Baird's Notes from Reid's Moral Philosophy Lectures, 1779–1780, ML MS. A104929, vol. 8, fo. 10r., where the book of which Reid made an abstract in MS. 4/III/20 is referred to.

<sup>5</sup>Stewart, "Account," in *Works*, pp. 10b–11a.



in fact he spoke them all.”<sup>6</sup> Millar, who was himself a pupil of Smith’s, described Smith’s own lecturing style in the following terms:

In delivering his lectures, he trusted almost entirely to extemporary elocution. His manner, though not graceful, was plain and unaffected; and, as he seemed to be always interested in the subject, he never failed to interest his hearers. Each discourse consisted commonly of several distinct propositions, which he successively endeavoured to prove and illustrate. These propositions, when announced in general terms, had, from their extent, not unfrequently something of the air of a paradox. In his attempts to explain them, he often appeared, at first, not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject, and spoke with some hesitation. As he advanced, however, the matter seemed to crowd upon him, his manner became warm and animated, and his expression easy and fluent. In points susceptible of controversy, you could easily discern, that he secretly conceived an opposition to his opinions, and that he was led upon this account to support them with greater energy and vehemence. By the fulness and variety of his illustrations, the subject gradually swelled in his hands, and acquired a dimension which, without a tedious repetition of the same views, was calculated to seize the attention of his audience, and to afford them pleasure, as well as instruction, in following the same object, through all the diversity of shades and aspects in which it was presented, and afterwards in tracing it backwards to that original proposition or general truth from which this beautiful train of speculation had proceeded.<sup>7</sup>

The point-form style that occasionally arises in Reid’s notes would indicate, however, that Reid sometimes did extemporize. As George Jardine noted on a bundle wrapper, while some parts of Reid’s lecture notes on the culture of the mind were “carefully composed and fairly written”, other parts were but “large Notes and Hints which were enlarged and illustrated in the Delivery.” An annotation which Jardine made on the wrapper of the bundle in which he placed the folder marked “Politicks” (which contained Reid’s lecture notes on that subject) indicates that Reid’s lecture notes on politics were of this type.<sup>8</sup>

Baird’s notes in particular provide some support for Jardine’s description in so far as they frequently contain substantial passages which have no precedent in Reid, interlarded with passages which nearly duplicate surviving lecture-note material in Reid’s own hand.

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<sup>6</sup>*Evidence, Oral and Documentary, Taken and Received by the Commissioners ... for Visiting the Universities of Scotland*, vol. 1, *University of Edinburgh* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1837), p. 399.

<sup>7</sup>Millar, quoted in Dugald Stewart, “Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith,” in Stewart, *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. William Hamilton, vol. 10, *Biographical Memoirs* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1858), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>See label on parcel in AUL MS. Box 2131.7.

Ideally, it would be extremely useful if it could be conclusively demonstrated that the surviving student notes were, in intention at least, *verbatim* transcripts of what Reid actually *said* in the classroom. Unfortunately, this cannot be demonstrated, even though there is an almost *verbatim* correspondence between many passages in the student notes and Reid's own MSS.<sup>9</sup> While contemporary reports do not have the same authority as material in Reid's own hand, they do point out certain *lacunae* in Reid's own notes and are the only available reports of what Reid said in the classroom on those points. In my thesis I used these materials extensively, for I believe that there is a legitimate place for them in Reid scholarship where they are used responsibly, i.e. where it is clearly indicated that they have been used and where the appropriate disclaimers are understood.

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<sup>9</sup>As an aid to interpretation I prepared a paste-up of Reid's, Baird's and Jack's notes in a side-by-side format with a view to locating parallel passages and identifying passages unique to any one of the texts.

## Appendix 3

### Principles of Transcription

- With one exception,<sup>1</sup> the main body of the text in the following transcription represents what I take to be the final version of Reid's lecture notes.
- Headings which are not prefixed by a letter or number are Reid's, with the exception of the main title and the shoulder headings in MS. 4/III/9.
- Spelling, capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing all follow Reid.
- Material deleted by Reid through successive versions, as well as a record of insertions and corrections, is given in the footnotes according to the following formula: Reid's final intention] the text as it appears on the MS page.
- Material deleted by Reid is enclosed in square brackets.
- Inadvertent repetitions of words by Reid (resulting from his own process of correction) are omitted from the main body of the text but indicated in the footnotes.
- Interlineations are given in [half square brackets].
- Carets, if any, are inserted before the material inserted in half square brackets; where Reid does not use a caret to indicate placement of an interlineation *and* where the placement of this material is conjectural a note has been inserted to indicate the element of conjecture involved in that placement. Where Reid has added a letter to the middle of a word either with or without a caret to show its placement the insertion is made silently.
- In cases where Reid has crossed out a word and written a different word above it, I have in the footnotes given the deleted word in square brackets followed by the new word in half square brackets.<sup>2</sup>
- Where Reid has corrected a word either by writing on top of his mistake so as to obscure the mistake (whether he crossed it out first or not) the mistake is silently passed over.
- Where Reid has drawn a line surmounted by a number over phrases he wished to rearrange I have silently rendered his text in the new order.
- Catchwords have been silently omitted.
- Conjectural readings with a high degree of plausibility and the occasional word added by me for sense are inserted in <angle brackets>.
- Editorial remarks whether in the main body of the text or in the footnotes are italicized in order to distinguish them from Reid's words.
- The long s is rendered as s.

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<sup>1</sup>The exception comes right at the beginning, where I reproduce in the main body of the text both the 1764–1765 and the 1765–1766 versions of Reid's introductory lecture on the principles of politics. My reason for so doing relates to the fact that the latter version only partly supersedes the former. As splicing the versions together would be somewhat arbitrary, I have elected to print the two versions *seriatim*, which has the virtue of dramatically illustrating Reid's change of approach to politics in his second and subsequent years of teaching at Glasgow College.

<sup>2</sup>I have not recorded the one case in which Reid crossed out an incorrect prefix of a word and inscribed the right prefix above it.

## Appendix 4

### Thomas Reid's Lectures on Politics

[4/III/1, 2r]

#### Heads of Lectures on Politicks

- 1 The Principles of Politicks in General Division.
- 2 The Constitution of a Despotick Government
- 3 The natural Consequences of Despotick Government with Reflexions
- 4 The Gothic Aristocracy Poland the Ancient Aristocracy Venice
- 5 Haringtons Oceana. Agrarian Rotation Suffrage. Parish Hundred & Tribe Elections.
- 6 Senate & popular Assembly.
- 7 Musters of the Youth. Education. Consensual Power. Titles of honour
- 8 Provincial Governments. Reflexions upon this Model of Government.
- 9 Other Commonwealths Ideal or Real
- 10 Pure Monarchy.
- 11, 12, 13.<sup>1</sup> British Constitution with Reflexions

#### Police

- 1 Of Population
- 2 Of National Virtue
- 3 Of Learning
- 4 Of National Riches wherein they Consist how<sup>2</sup> at first produced & acquired & kept
- 5 Of Commerce Natural Artificial the different periods of the Last
- 6 Of Money. As a Commodity & a Medium of Commerce Weighed or Coined.
- 7 Of false Maxims with regard to Money
- 8 Of Interest of Money, & Exchange with forreign Nations. Ballance of Trade
- 9 Of Banks & Paper Credit. Of Luxury
- 10 Of Premiums, imposts, Prohibitions. Free Ports as they Affect Traffick
- 11 Of Navigation & Colonies as they Affect Trade
- 12 Of The Effects of Trade on the Morals & Strength of a Nation

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<sup>1</sup> 13.] 13. [Mixed].

<sup>2</sup>how] how [acquire].

- 13 Arms Naval, &<sup>3</sup> Land Forces. Hired Troops, Standing Armies Militia Forts  
 14 Revenue. Crown Lands. Customs, Excise, Land Tax. Taxes on the Necessaries  
 of Life on Luxury. Poll Taxes Census. Lotteries National Debt.

## A. The Principles of Politics

### 1. INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

[1r] Political is the Art of Modelling<sup>4</sup> & Governing<sup>5</sup> Societys of Men<sup>6</sup> so as to answer the End proposed by them

The Principles of Political Reasoning<sup>7</sup> must be the Active Principles<sup>8</sup> (of) Human Nature<sup>9</sup> the Principles according to which the Governed commonly Act not these according to which they ought to Act. How the Politician differs from the Man of Address & Sagacity. & from the Cunning Man<sup>10</sup> The General Principles of Action Among Men are Such as these

- 1 Men will generally be just honest & true where they have no Temptation to be otherwise
- 2 Men have always a Strong Resentment of Injuries and will resist them where it is in their Power & have commonly some Gratitude for good Offices.
- 3 Tho a cool Desire of Happiness & a Regard to duty have some Influse on the Actions of All men yet it does not appear that either of these are the Prevailing Principles in Most Men
- 4 It may be therefore expected of the Generality of Men that they will do things contrary either to their real Interest or their Duty when they have Strong temptations. either knowingly or by imposing upon themself(ve)s
- 5 Few Men will do the most Atrocious Acts of Wickedness even upon a Strong Temptation till they have been long hardned by Vicious habits

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<sup>3</sup>Naval, &] Naval, ^ [&].

<sup>4</sup>Modelling] [Forming] [Modelling].

<sup>5</sup>Governing] Governing [Political].

<sup>6</sup>Societys of Men] Societys ^ [of Men].

<sup>7</sup>Political Reasoning] Political [Reasoning].

<sup>8</sup>be the Active Principles] be [drawn from] [the Active Principles].

<sup>9</sup>Nature] Nature [& be].

<sup>10</sup>Act. How ... Cunning Man] Act. [How ... Cunning Man]. *Interlinear material whose placement is conjectural.*



- 6 Men always esteem Virtue Wisdom & Power in others where they are not objects of Envy<sup>11</sup> and desire to be possessed of them or to be thought to be possessed of them themselves
- 7 Mens private Affections are commonly Stronger then thier publick ones
8. Mens Characters are formed mostly by Education Custom & Example
9. In a Great Number of Men taken without Distinction there will always be found a few that are far Superior to the Rest in Wisdom or Virtue Power.<sup>12</sup> or all these
10. People will not long receive Laws from Governors unless they have an opinion that the Governors have superior Power Superior Wisdom & Virtue or Right to Govern
- 11 Like Effects may be expected from like Causes, and similar Conduct from persons of like Characters in like Circumstances.
- 12 In all great Bodies of Men who either meet together or can easily communicate their Sentiments to each other, the MANY will be led by a few, of Superior Parts, Superior Eloquence or Superior Character, & will imbibe their Sentiments Passions and Opinions.

## 2. INTRODUCTORY LECTURE, 1766 VERSION

[4/III/3, 1r]  
May 5 1766

### Politicks

[5r] Politicks like most other Branches<sup>13</sup> of Knowledge that relate to Practice may be considered either as an Art or as a Science. If we consider it as an Art it may be defined to be The Art of Modeling & governing a State so as to answer the End intended by it. The bussiness of the politician is either to frame a Model of Government for a larger or lesser political Society. Or to preserve repair alter or amend a Government already formed. To discover the latent seeds of those diseases, which if not cured in time are destructive of the political Union, & bring it to dissolution at last, & to be able to find out and apply the proper Remedies<sup>14</sup> [1r] It is very obvious that

<sup>11</sup>others ... Envy] others  $\wedge$  [where ... Envy].

<sup>12</sup>Virtue Power.] Virtue  $\wedge$  [Power] or [Both].

<sup>13</sup>Branches] Branches [that].

<sup>14</sup>Politicks ... Remedies] Politicks ... Remedies [1r] [Politicks like most branches of Knowledge that relate to practice may be conceived either as an Art or as a Science If we consider it as an Art it may be defined to be The Art of Modelling and Governing a State so as to answer the Ends proposed by it. And this Art I conceive may be reduced to these two Problems First A Constitution or Form of Government being given, to shew what are the natural Effects and Consequences of that Constitution, Whether for Instance it will be lasting or of short Duration, whether powerfull against forreign Enemies or weak and easily Subdued, whether it will be internally quiet and peaceable, or turbulent and seditious, whether the Subjects will be oppressed, or enjoy the common Rights [which] & Liberties of Men.

the end of Government ought to be the good and happiness of the Governed: And therefore every Model or Form of Government, if we judge of it by the moral Standard is to be more or less approved according as it tends more or less to promote<sup>15</sup> this end. In this view the Destruction of a bad form of Government may be a mean to the Production of a better<sup>16</sup> But there may be other ends of Government proposed, and as an expert Physician ought to understand the nature and Effects of Poisons as well as Medicines; so an able Politician ought to understand the nature & Effects of all kinds of Government the bad as well as the good.

[5r] Many Ancient and Modern<sup>17</sup> Authors have confounded Politicks with Morals, which ought carefully to be avoided. Machiavel & Harrington free from this Fault.<sup>18</sup> There is a Branch of Iurispudence which is very properly called political Jurispudence. The Object of this Branch. The Rights & moral Obligations that arise from the political Union.

The same Question may be considered either in a political or in a Moral Light Instance Tolleration of those who are not of the established Religion.<sup>19</sup>

[1r] Politicks considered as a Science is the Knowledge of those principles by which we may Judge of the Constitution and Effects of<sup>20</sup> Government Knowledge in Politicks enables us to Judge whether such a particular form of Government is properly fitted and adapted to promote the happiness & preserve the Rights of the Subjects: Or whether on the contrary from the nature and constitution of the Government the subjects will frequently<sup>21</sup> be oppressed, injured, and tyrannically used? Whether the Political Body will be quiet & peceable or on the contrary tumultuous and Seditious. Whether it will be Strong to defend itself against forreign Ennemies, or feeble & easily subdued in War.

Political Bodies as well as Natural Bodies of Men and Animals are liable both to internal Disorders and Diseases and to external hurts & injuries It is by political Knowledge that the Governours of States are enabled often to foresee those disorders that are incident to the political Body and to prevent them, or to discover their causes

The second Problem is, Having given the end for which a Constitution is intended, to shew that Constitution & model which will most effectually promote and Secure this end.]. *Text has been replaced because Reid wrote Substitute A in left-hand margin next to this passage, marking it off with a line.*

<sup>15</sup>to promote] to  $\wedge$  [promote].

<sup>16</sup>end. In ... better] end. [In ... bad  $\wedge$  [form of] Government ... better].

<sup>17</sup>Many Ancient and Modern] Many  $\wedge$  [Ancient and Modern].

<sup>18</sup>avoided. Machiavel ... Fault.] avoided.  $\wedge$  [Machiavel ... Fault.].

<sup>19</sup>Many ... Religion. *Placement indicated by Reid's insertion add B after good.*

<sup>20</sup>Effects of] Effects of [Effects] Of.

<sup>21</sup>will frequently] will  $\wedge$  [frequently].

when they happen; & to<sup>22</sup> apply proper remedies Politicks has a like Relation to States & to Government as the Science of Medicine has to the human Body, and the Politician is the State Physician. He knows wharein the Sound & healthfull Constitution of the State consists. When any disorder appears in it he can judge by the Symptoms what is the cause of that disorder and he knows what are the Remedies and can prescribe for<sup>23</sup> them with great probability of Success

The Analogy between Prudence in an individual and Political Knowledge in the Government of a State Prudence consists chiefly in chusing proper Means to accomplish the Ends we have in View. So does Political Knowl The ends of a Private Man concern him self chiefly & his family & Friends. The ends of a Politician concern the State. Prudence distinguished from Craft in the Politician as in the Private Man. Prudence in the one as in the other grounded chiefly upon the knowledge of Mankind<sup>24</sup>

Objection. No Government framed or changed by Art

Every Science must be grounded on certain<sup>25</sup> principles & if Politicks can be at all reduced to a Science, as I doubt not but it may, there must be certain first Principles from which all our Reasonings in Politicks are deduced [1v] as there are certain first Principles or Axioms in Mathematicks upon which all our Reasonings in Mathematicks are built, and as there are in Morals certain first Principles, as we have had occasion to shew, upon which our Reasoning in the Science of Morals are built.

It is easy to shew that the first Principles of Politicks, upon which all Political Reasoning is grounded, must be taken from the Knowledge of<sup>26</sup> Mankind. By the Knowledge of Mankind I mean not the Knowledge of the piculiar temper and talent(s) of individuals but the Knowledge of the temper and Disposition, the Principles of Action and general tenor of Conduct that is common to the whole Species.

Every Political Body may be conceived as a vast Machine made up of a great Number of Parts. The Motions of the Whole are made up of the Motions of the several Parts, and the motion of each Part must depend upon the powers that operate upon<sup>27</sup> that part and put it in motion. So that it is impossible to know scientifically<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>& to] & [to].

<sup>23</sup>prescribe for] prescribe  $\wedge$  [for].

<sup>24</sup>The ... Mankind. *Material marked X written vertically in left-hand margin from bottom to top of page whose placement is indicated by Reid's X after Success. Deleted material* The Nature of a Political Body compared with the Natural *marked C from fol. 5r whose placement here was indicated by Reid's C in left-hand margin.*

<sup>25</sup>on certain] on [first]  $\wedge$  [certain].

<sup>26</sup>Knowledge of] Knowledge  $\wedge$  [of].

<sup>27</sup>that operate upon] that [move]  $\wedge$  [operate upon].

<sup>28</sup>know scientifically] know  $\wedge$  [scientifically].

the Effects that will be produced by the whole Machine without knowing the parts of which it is compounded and the powers that actuate these parts, for the Effect of the whole is an aggregate or composition of the Effects of the several Parts. The parts of which a Commonwealth or State is made up are Men. Each of whom has his particular Principles of Activity in himself,<sup>29</sup> his fears, his hopes his desires, his passions, his Reason, his Conscience. These principles in every individual influence him to a certain course of Action or operation. And the Operation of the Several Individuals makes up the Operation of the Whole Political Body. We cannot therefore know how Political Bodies will act, what Effects they will produce in given Circumstances, but by knowing how individuals of Mankind act in the various Circumstances in which they may be placed. But if on the other hand we know how<sup>30</sup> human Creatures will Act when placed in the Circumstances in which the members of such a Political Society are placed; then we may know; the Effects with regard to the whole Body which will result from the United Operation of the Several Parts. Hence it is evident that<sup>31</sup> the first Principles of Political Reasoning must in general be of this Kind, to wit, That such is the Nature of Mankind that Men placed in such Circumstances will generally act in such a Manner. If any<sup>32</sup> Principles of this kind can be ascertained from our Knowledge of human Nature, or from Experience; Such Principles must be the foundation of all Political Reasoning. And the Conclusions that may justly be drawn from such Principles will make up the Science of Politicks. If on the other hand no Such principles can be discovered then there is no Such Science as Politicks.

Here a general Objection against all Political Knowledge may occur which we shall consider before we proceed farther.

It may be said that human Actions are free and do not necessarily follow upon motives. We cannot therefore<sup>33</sup> fortell how a man will act in any particular Situation even although we know<sup>34</sup> all the principles and motives which influence him because he may yield to the force of those motives or he may resist them and act contrary to them. And if we cannot know how any one man will act in a particular case how shall we know how a great many will act since the many are made up [2r] of individuals. If men always acted according to the Strongest motive there is some foundation for human foresight of their Actions from the knowledge of their Situation and the Principles of their Nature. But if there is no Necessary connexion between Actions

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<sup>29</sup>himself,] himself, [by these he is].

<sup>30</sup>know how] know how how.

<sup>31</sup>evident that] evident that that that.

<sup>32</sup>any] any [such].

<sup>33</sup>therefore] therefore [if we].

<sup>34</sup>although we know] although [we know].



and the Motives of the Agent there is no foundation left for any human knowledge of the Actions of free Agents, how they will behave in given Situations consequently no foundation for any political Knowledge.

In answer to this objection I shall endeavour to prove these two things 1 That although the Objection seems onely to affect those who hold the Liberty of human Actions yet it will be found equally strong against those who hold them to be necessary 2 That even<sup>35</sup> on the supposition of Liberty, this objection has no force against the reality of political Knowledge.

1 This Objection if it had any force would leave no foundation for Political Knowledge to those who hold human Actions to be necessary any more than to those who hold them free. Because it must be acknowledged by those who hold the necessity of human Actions that the motives or Causes<sup>36</sup> from which those actions necessarily<sup>37</sup> follow cannot be known to a Spectator, nay that they cannot be known to the Agent himself. It is evident from experience that the same Motives have not always the same Operation upon the same Man, and that different Men in like Circumstances as far as can be perceived act differently. A Fatalist will say that in these cases there were some causes unknown to us which produced this variety. Now the uncertainty of the Event to us will be the same when<sup>38</sup> it proceeds from causes or motives<sup>39</sup> that are unknown as when the motives do not necessarily produce the Action. Upon the Supposition of Necessity the Action necessarily depends upon the Strongest motive, but there are motives so hidden & obscure that we cannot perceive them nor have we any Standard by which we may judge of their Strength. For it must be acknowledged by those who hold the necessity of human Actions. That<sup>40</sup> in human Actions sometimes passion prevails over our Reason sometimes Reason prevails over passion. Sometimes the desire of fame prevails over the desire of riches or of pleasure and sometimes yields to them. A present good is sometimes preferred to a future and sometimes a future to a present nor can there be any certain rule ascertained by which we can judge when the one or when the other will be most prevalent. Now our Ignorance of the event will be the very same whether it proceed from ignorance of the causes of that Event or from, the want of a necessary connexion between those causes and the event which is supposed to be their Effect. From hence I think it appears evident that a Fatalist supposing his System to be true, has no better means of

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<sup>35</sup>That even] That [in reality]  $\wedge$  [even] [against].

<sup>36</sup>motives or Causes] motives  $\wedge$  [or Causes].

<sup>37</sup>actions necessarily] actions  $\wedge$  [necessarily].

<sup>38</sup>same when] same [whether] [when].

<sup>39</sup>causes or motives] causes  $\wedge$  [or motives].

<sup>40</sup>That] That <men>.



establishing any Principles of Politiks than the Assertor of the Liberty of human Actions. If the fatalist affirms that certain Rules<sup>41</sup> may be pointed out according to which men generally Act, although sometimes from unknown Causes they may deviate from those Rules. This may be affirmed no less on the Supposition of our being free. And whether those deviations from the common Rules of Conduct be the Effect of Necessary but unknown Causes or whether they be the Effect of Caprice in men who act freely, they are equally unaccountable, And all that can be inferred from them is That Politicks is founded chiefly on Probability and not on Demonstration. This is undoubtedly true

[2v] 2 There is indeed no force in the objection that has been moved to prove that we may not know how men will commonly act in certain given circumstances notwithstanding the liberty of human Action. A wise man will act wisely though it be ever so much in his power to act otherwise. And a good man will act a good part although it be in his power to act a bad one. The Supreme being being perfectly wise and good always invariably acts according to perfect wisdom and goodness although he acts with perfect freedom. And in proportion as men are wise and good they will act wisely and well Human wisdom and goodness are both imperfect and therefore we cannot reckon upon it that they will always act the wisest and the best part. But there is some degree of Wisdom some degree of virtue even in Men. One that has no degree of wisdom or prudence<sup>42</sup> is an Idiot or Changeling. Some Such there are of the human Species but a political Society could not be formed of Such. Men must be supposed to have<sup>43</sup> common understanding in order to form a Common wealth. Now there are many things with regard to the conduct of men of common Understanding which we may rely upon with great Security notwithstanding their being free Agents. Thus we may rely upon it that a man of common Understanding will take some Care of himself, both to avoid what is hurtfull and to procure what is agreeable and usefull, that he will<sup>44</sup> take some Care of his Children and have some Natural Affection to his Family Friends and Acquaintance We may reckon upon it, that he will have<sup>45</sup> some sense of good offices done him, and some resentment of Injuries. That in proportion to his Strength and Courage he will defend himself & his Rights, and repell Injuries. The common principles of human Nature lead every Man good and bad to act such a part, in the common occurrences of Life. And a Man in whom these principles of Conduct did not exert their Force must be as great a prodigy as a Man born without

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<sup>41</sup>certain Rules] certain [principles] [Rules].

<sup>42</sup>prudence] prudence [or Wisdom].

<sup>43</sup>Such. Men ... have] Such. [It can onely be formed of] Men [that] [must ... have] have.

<sup>44</sup>will] will [have].

<sup>45</sup>have] have [a sense].

hands or feet, which indeed has sometimes happened but is an Event so rare that<sup>46</sup> in the course of human affairs we never think it deserves attention.

But farther it ought to be observed that we may form much more certain conclusions with regard to the conduct of a body of Men united in political Society than with respect to the conduct of an individual. For although the Many are made up of individuals, yet it is easier, in many cases to guess at the behaviour of the Many than at that of the individuals which compose it. The jarring Passions Interests and Views of individuals when mingled together make a Compound whose Nature is more fixed and determined than that of the Ingredients of which it is made up. Wisdom and Folly, Reason and Passion Virtue and Vice blended together make a pretty Uniform Character in great Bodies of Men in all Ages and Nations; where there is not an uncommon Degree of general Corruption on the one hand or of Virtue on the Other. It is from this Uniformity of Character in a Multitude of Men notwithstanding of the Diversity of the Individuals of which it is composed, that all General Principles in Politicks are derived

2 Obj. The good or Bad Effects of Government depend entirely upon the Administration & not upon the form of the Government. See D. Humes Essay. 3 Whether Politicks may be reduced to a Science The best Monarchy Hereditary. The best Aristocracy a Nobility without Vassals The best Democracy a people voting by their Representatives. Despotick Governments easily held when Conquered.

[5r] Ax 1. To denominate a Man truly Virtuous it is necessary not onely that he should have the<sup>47</sup> Principles of Virtue in his Constitution, which all men have in some degree, but that these, in the general Course of his Life, should be superior to the temptations to which he is exposed, so that his conduct be<sup>48</sup> in the main<sup>49</sup> agreeable to his Duty. This degree of Virtue is not supposed in the Axiom laid down. But it may will be supposed that the generality of men<sup>50</sup> will not do bad things without any temptation. This must be true of every man at least that is not corrupted in his principles and morals to the highest degree so as to have totally<sup>51</sup> lost all sense<sup>52</sup> of duty and even all regard to character. which it is to be hoped is the case of very few if any at all of mankind. And indeed if we should suppose that the generality of Men of any Nation were so abandoned as to have no degree of regard to Justice Honesty and

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<sup>46</sup>that] that [there].

<sup>47</sup>necessary ... the] necessary  $\wedge$  [not onely] that he [should have the].

<sup>48</sup>conduct be] conduct  $\wedge$  [be].

<sup>49</sup>main] main [(is)].

<sup>50</sup>generality of men] generality  $\wedge$  [of men].

<sup>51</sup>have totally] have  $\wedge$  [totally].

<sup>52</sup>sense] sense [both].

truth, I think it is not possible that<sup>53</sup> they could be kept together under any kind of<sup>54</sup> Government but that of absolute Slavery. They behaved to be chained as wild beasts and have the dread of punishment constantly hanging over their heads to keep them from doing mischief.

If men were perfectly virtuous & proof against all temptations there would be no Need of Civil Government. Men would do their duty without being compelled by Laws and punishments. It is therefore very true which a sacred writer observes that the Law is not made for the just but for the unjust. What is here said of Law which is a part of political Government may be applied to the whole of it.

[5v] The bulk of Men are neither so good as they ought to be nor so bad as they might be. Natural Affection, Gratitude, Compassion & other good Affections have<sup>55</sup> commonly a considerable degree of force even in the vicious. As Regard to Character & dread of the Contempt and Indignation of Mankind are powerfull restraints<sup>56</sup> even upon bad Men,<sup>57</sup> Common Prudence & the desire of self preservation oblige them to abstain from open Violations of the rights of<sup>58</sup> others. When individuals are found, who break through all these Restraints; the terror of legal Punishment and publick Disgrace, are a very proper Adminicle, to those Restraints that Nature hath provided against criminal Conduct. And when all these restraints lose their force a man is no longer fit for Society, he is justly cut off as a rotten member<sup>59</sup> by capital Punishment for the terror of others. There is therefore a certain degree of profligacy that makes a Man fit onely for a prison,<sup>60</sup> for the stocks or the Gibett.<sup>61</sup> And if we should suppose all Men of this Character they would not be materials fit for Political Society.

In some States of Society<sup>62</sup> the generality of men may live very innocently with a small degree of Virtue. This is the case of rude Nations. Small Property In others states there will be both greater exertions of Virtue in some individuals<sup>63</sup> and greater corruption in other. Difference of Ranks great Trust Refinements of high living.

Ax 2 Personal Injuries have often occasioned Revolutions in States One of the chief Advantages of civil Government is that it puts the determination of differences

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<sup>53</sup>that] that that.

<sup>54</sup>of] of [civil].

<sup>55</sup>have] have have.

<sup>56</sup>powerfull restraints] powerfull  $\wedge$  [restraints].

<sup>57</sup>Men,] Men, [And even].

<sup>58</sup>of ... of] of  $\wedge$  [the rights of].

<sup>59</sup>off ... member] off  $\wedge$  [as ... member].

<sup>60</sup>prison,] prison, [or].

<sup>61</sup>the ... Gibett.] the  $\wedge$  [stocks ... Gibett] [Gallows].

<sup>62</sup>Society] Society [men].

<sup>63</sup>some individuals] some [individuals].

among men in the laws and Judicatures and thereby greatly weakens the fury of  
Resentment and Revenge

Ax 3. It is good that Men be instructed in their Duty & Interest but this is not enough.

Ax 4 The more a people are corrupted in their Morals the less they are capable of freedom. That degree of Liberty which men will abuse to their own hurt and that of others ought to be taken from them. Good Men ought to have Liberty They are entitled to it and will make a good Use of it. But in proportion as Men are disposed to make a bad use of their Liberty it is for their own good & necessary for the safety of others that it should be taken from them.

[6v] Ax 9. When we consider the Nature of Political Government, there is something in<sup>64</sup> it that may seem at first view strange and difficult to be accounted for. In all Governments a few govern the Many the greater part are led & there is perhaps not above one hundred part of the whole that can be said to direct and govern in matters that concern the whole Body, the Multitude are swayed by the Judgement of a few,

[3r] Commerce has of Late been made a Subject of Philosophical Disquisition; and as it must be acknowledged to be both a curious and interesting<sup>65</sup> Subject, it has been pursued by many able<sup>66</sup> Writers with much ingenuity, and with considerable Success. It has been made abundantly evident that very gross mistakes in the Political Economy of States have been committed and are still committed through Ignorance of the Principles of Commerce. Future ages must reap benefit from every discovery of this kind, and may on the other hand be greatly hurt by false Notions upon this Subject.

### 3. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS — CONTINUATION

[4/III/2, 1r]

Having pointed out some of<sup>67</sup> the axioms or first Principles upon which reasoning in Politicks must be grounded, you will see by the Specimen I have given, for I do not pretend to a full enumeration, of what kind these axioms are. They are the rules according to which men generally Act. The Actions of Men are the Subject of all Political Reasoning. The design of it is to shew how great bodies of Men will act in the various Situations in which they are placed & how they may be placed in such

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<sup>64</sup>in] in [the Nature of].

<sup>65</sup>and interesting] and [important] [interesting].

<sup>66</sup>many able] many [ingenious] [able].

<sup>67</sup>out some of] out  $\wedge$  [some of].

Situations as to lead them or the greater part of them to act the part which it is intended they should act. We must therefore in this Science suppose Men endowed with that degree of Understanding which we actually perceive in the generality of Men That are come to maturity. Children that are under Age are not capable of political Government. They are under the restraint<sup>68</sup> and discipline of parents until they come to be of Age to act for themselves. And as there are some few<sup>69</sup> of the human race that are born ideots and never acquire the Understanding of a Man, or to be capable of directing their own Conduct, they must likewise be entrusted to the care of others, who may guard them from doing hurt to themselves or others. And they do not properly make a part of the political Body, There can be no<sup>70</sup> reasoning with regard to their Actions, nor do political Events depend upon them. Thus we see that when we reason in Politicks about the Actions of Men, we do not include Children or Idiots in the Number on account of their defect of Understanding.

It is farther to be observed that political Reasonings. suppose not onley a certain degree of Understanding in Man but likewise a certain degree of Morals. Mankind with regard to their Morals may be comprehended under three Classes

1 There are some individuals of Mankind so very profligate and abandoned as to break through all the resraints which either their own interest or that of their families and friends or a regard to reputation lay upon them. There can be no Reasoning about the actions of such profligates, nor any dependance upon them that<sup>71</sup> they will act by the Rules of common prudence & decency. It is to be hoped that those of this character are so few in comparison, that they may be altogether [1v] overlooked in political Reasoning. A political Society could not be formed of such Men. It would have no cement or principle of Union & therefore would immediately fall to pieces and dissolve. When such Characters appear in Society they must either be confined as wild beasts for the common Safety, or they must be delivered over to publick Justice for the terror of other & cut off from the political Body as rotten members. The maxims of Politicks therefore do not extend to these

2, On the other hand it is to be hoped that in all great bodies of Men there are to be found some Persons of such perfect Virtue and Integrity that they have no need of the restraints of human laws and government. They discharge their Duty to the publick & to individuals from principle and inclination and would injure no man even tho they could do it with impunity.

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<sup>68</sup>restraint] restraint [of pa].

<sup>69</sup>some few] some [few].

<sup>70</sup>Body ... no] Body, [nor can] There [be any] [can be no].

<sup>71</sup>them that] them  $\wedge$  [that].



If any Society of Men were so happy as to be made up of persons of this Character, it might be without Laws and Government, or all kinds of Government would be alike & have the same Effect. But the Number of Persons of such incorruptible Virtue is so small in any great Body of Men, that they also are overlooked in political reasonings and the<sup>72</sup> Common maxims of Politicks do not apply to them.

3 There remains a third Class which comprehends the great bulk of Mankind and of every Political Society. And it is to them onely that the Maxims of Politicks can properly be applied, because upon them and their Conduct all political Events must depend.

They are neither so abandoned as the first class, nor so much to be trusted as the second, they fill up all the interval between the two, and are such as we may reasonably expect men to be, of whose characters we have no particular knowledge<sup>73</sup>

Political Prudence is grounded upon the very same Principles as the Prudence of a private Man in his transactions with other Men. Real Prudence in the conduct of Life requires that we should keep the proper mean between too much trust in those we deal with and to much distrust. If we go into the first extream, we expose ourselves to frequent danger & disappointment. If we go into the other extream we shall frequently lose the best opportunities of carrying on our bussiness The prudent Man takes the just medium between these extreams, and by that means generally accomplishes his Ends. The political Reasoner in like Manner must form his judgment of the conduct of political Societies, neither upon the Supposition that they are more vicious & [2r] profligate than men generally are nor upon the Supposition that they are more virtuous & upright. And you will easily perceive that the Axioms or Principles I have mentioned are applicable to persons of such a middle Character which will always be found to make up the<sup>74</sup> great body of every political Society

Having thus pointed out the first principles from which we must Reason in Politicks, I proceed to the first branch of that Science I proposed to handle, to wit the various Forms of Political Government with their Causes & Effects.

It is usual in treating of this Subject to consider the Causes of political Government in general

B. Forms of Political Government with Their Causes and Effects  
[4/III/1, 1v]

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<sup>72</sup>the] the [M].

<sup>73</sup>be ... knowledge] be, [with] [of] whose ∧ [characters] we ... particular [acquaintance] [knowledge].

<sup>74</sup>the] the the.

Definition of the 3 Simple Forms of political<sup>75</sup> Government Despotism Pure

Aristocracy pure Democracy. All others Mixt

The Parts of Supreme Power Legislative Executive Judiciary. The imposing of Taxes.

# 1. THE CONSTITUTION OF A DESPOTIC GOVERNMENT

1 Despotism Requires 1 That the Grand Seignior should be possessed of the Greatest part <or> Whole of the Land as his property & that the Subjects should be his Tennants at Will and hold it by military Service or Offices.<sup>76</sup> 2 That no Honours be Hereditary. but depend on the will of the Prince 3 That the Grand Seignior be Heir to those who hold offices in the Government<sup>77</sup> 3 That there be a Standing Army of Soldiers that have no interest in the Country sufficient to keep the people in Awe 4 That there be no Standing Laws or very few. 5 That the Provinces be governed by a Basha & his Deputies who have both the civil & Military Power 6 That these be often Changed. 7 That the punishment of crimes against the State be Severe & Sudden without formal trial 8 That the Apparent Sucessor to the Crown have no Access to corrupt the Army 9 The Reigning Family be believed to have a Divine Right. 10 That the Subjects be trained by Education and Instruction of their Priests to absolute & unlimited submission to the will of his Superiors as to the will of Heaven.

## a. *Maxims Relating to Despotism*

### Maxims Relating to Despotism

1 The Grand Seignior will commonly throw the whole care of the Government upon one Person called the Grand Vizir & be entirely Swallowed up in the Pleasures of his Seraglio. The Choise of the Vizir & other Officers of State<sup>78</sup> will commonly depend on the Women and Eunuchs. 2 The Grand Vizir must be Sacrifised when the Army is out of Humor or he must Sacrifise the Grand Seignior. 3 The Government of Families will be absolute as well as that of the State. 4 Commerce can never flourish in such a State 5 Learning will commonly be discouragd 6 Patience Contentment Resignation Contempt of Riches & a Contemplative Devotion Caution Secrecy<sup>79</sup> & fair Dealing will be the Characteristic Virtues of the People 7 Such a Government

<sup>75</sup>of political] of  $\wedge$  [political].

<sup>76</sup>Will ... Offices.] Will  $\wedge$  [and ... Offices].

<sup>77</sup>3 ... Government. *Material written vertically in left-hand margin from bottom to top of page whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>78</sup>of ... State] of [whom]  $\wedge$  [the ... State].

<sup>79</sup>Devotion Caution Secrecy] Devotion [Caution Secrecy].

under a good and Vigilant & peaceable<sup>80</sup> Prince may be happy but such a one will be most likely to fall a Sacrifice to the Army. 8. A despotic Government in the Hands of Warlike Princes is fit for making Conquests & very difficult to be conquered. But if once conquered easily submits to the Victor. 9 A good Turk ought to spend his vacant hours either with his wives or in the Exercises of his Religion 10 As the Grand Seignior derives his Authority in a Great Measure from the Religion of the Country so that<sup>81</sup> is the only thing that sets any bounds to it. The power of the Clergy is therefore a blessing in Such a Government. The Grand Seignior can not impose a New Tax but this Occasions the Greater Oppression by his Bashaws Turkey the most perfect Model of Despotism

### **b. Reflections**

[4/III/5, 1r]

Apr 17 1765

We have explained as briefly as we could the Nature of Despotick Government; the Principles, upon which alone it can stand firm; and the natural Consequences of it with regard to the Commerce learning Morals<sup>82</sup> and happiness of a Nation that is thus governed.

From the Nature of this Government it is evident that the Reason of State in such Governments is not the Good & happiness of the Governed but the gratification of the Monarch he is so far exalted above his slaves that he considers them as created only to serve his ambition his lust & *one word illegible*<sup>83</sup> his Caprice Thousands of his slaves must be buried in mines digging for Rubies and Diamonds to adorn his Diadem and his Throne.<sup>84</sup> A vast Empire must be ransacked<sup>85</sup> for fine Women who are shut up by hundreds in the Seraglio to serve his pleasures; great numbers of Eunuchs must be made and trained up to guard the Women and to do all the offices of the Seraglio. The Eunuchs & the Women are his only Companions. And these are valued in proportion to their Address in inventing new pleasures & amusements;<sup>86</sup> His Mind invigorated by sloth sensuality and Luxury. He sees not his Subjects nor do they see him least they should conceive him to be but a man.<sup>87</sup> His repose must not be disturbed by the groans and miseries of the wretched. Like the Gods of Epicurus he

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<sup>80</sup>Vigilant & peaceable] Vigilant ^ [& peaceable].

<sup>81</sup>that] that that.

<sup>82</sup>learning Morals] learning ^ [Morals].

<sup>83</sup>&] & ^ *one word illegible*.

<sup>84</sup>Thousands ... Throne. *Material written vertically in left-hand margin from bottom to top of page whose placement is indicated by Reid's reference mark.*

<sup>85</sup>be ransacked] be [searched] [ransacked].

<sup>86</sup>amusements;] amusements; [which].

<sup>87</sup>him man.] him ^ [least ... man].

lives far removed from human affairs and deigns not to concern himself about beings so far below his Nature. He throws the Whole burthen of the Government upon his grand Vizier and neither knows nor desires to know what is doing in his vast dominion. If his subjects are oppressed and plundered and ravaged by cruel Bashas their cries cannot reach the throne. If the Seraglio be safe and in peace he hears of what happens beyond its precincts, if he hears of it at all, as we hear of a Revolution in China or Japan.

But after all what is this Mighty Monarch who is thus to be pampered at the expence of the labour and treasure and blood of Millions of the human Race? Why, by his birth he is a man of the same Nature with the meanest of his Slaves. By his Education and manner of Life he is sunk below humanity. He is neither endowed with that Knowledge that enlarges and elevates a human Mind, nor will those habits of Prudence Selfcommand temperance fortitude Justice and goodness which constitute real Worth and Merit. Yet with all this worthlessness & real Meanness he conceives himself a God, or something of a [lv] nature far superior to other Men. And every thing that is said or done to him every thing about him conspires to fix this vain conceit of his own Superiority

Such Must<sup>88</sup> the Monarch in those Despotick Governments be for the most part. This is the natural Consequence of his training and manner of Life; and such we know from History the greater part of Such Monarchs are and have been.

The depression of the Subjects in such a Government must bear proportion to the Exaltation of the Sovereign. Those who on account of their poverty and meanness are unknown to the people in power have the best chance to escape oppression. Every man that is eminent in Riches in Authority or in Parts and in Knowledge becomes a mark to the avarice or envy or jealousy of those who have him absolutely in their power. This state to men who are trained up with<sup>89</sup> a sense of Liberty would be intollerable, they would rather in habit the wilds of America with the Hurons or Eskimaux than be the slaves of the Great Mogul. But man is a very tractable Animal and can be trained to bear the extremities of want poverty pain hunger cold and even Slavery itself with patience and resignation. The ancients Greeks and Romans who enjoyed a happy Climate and a moderate temperature of Air thought it impossible for human Creatures to subsist either in the torrid or in the frozed Zone, but Experience has discovered their Error. A laplander or a Samoeid thinks his countrey the finest in the World which an Italiian would conceive it the greatest Misery to be condemned to. An Eskimaux can Regale upon a meal of raw fish or Whale blubber which a person

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<sup>88</sup>Must] Must be.

<sup>89</sup>up with] up in ^ [with]

used to the delicacies of cookery<sup>90</sup> could not swallow if he should starve. The meanest cottager in England who is an object of pity and Charity on account of his poverty, lives in a more delicate manner and has more real Riches and Accommodations in his house furniture apparel & table than a Canadian Prince at the head of his tribe. In like manner a Chinese<sup>91</sup> or a Subject of the Great Mogul, thinks himself more<sup>92</sup> happy in being the slave of<sup>93</sup> a mighty Monarch, than the Subject of a free Government. Lord Molesworth in his Account of Denmark observes very justly that Slavery like a sickly constitution becomes in time habitual so as to be thought no burthen. It mortifies ambition Emulation and other troublesome as well as active qualities which the sense of Liberty produces. And the Slave banishing all thought of the future and reflexion upon the past, sings in his chains like a bird confined to a Cage<sup>94</sup> And makes the best of the present Moment.

[2r] There is not a more mortifying view of human Nature than we are presented with when we reflect that so great a part of the human Race have been for thousands of years held in this dreadful Slavery of Despotick Government. But it would be still more Mortifying to conceive as the Ingenious Montesquieu does that those Climates which Nature has favoured most by a variety of natural Productions for the use of the human Species<sup>95</sup> should by a kind of fatality be necessarily subjected to this kind of Government.

This kind of Government the most simple and inartificial therefore has prevailed among the least enlightened Nations and must always keep those Nations in Ignorance of the Rights of Mankind And the principles of policy. This Government cannot continue long in a single City, but once Settled in a large Empire may last for many Ages

### 3. ARISTOCRACY

Apr 18

Oligarchy and Aristocracy sometimes confounded<sup>96</sup> by ancient writers Oligarchy is considered as the corruption of Aristocracy as Despotism is by him accounted the corruption of Monarchy, and Anarchy the Corruption of Democracy.

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<sup>90</sup>cookery] cookery [would starve rather than S].

<sup>91</sup>a Chinese] a [turk] [Chinese].

<sup>92</sup>himself more] himself  $\wedge$  [more].

<sup>93</sup>of] of [such].

<sup>94</sup>chains ... Cage] chains  $\wedge$  [like ... Cage].

<sup>95</sup>of ... Species] of  $\wedge$  [the] human [Creatures] [Species].

<sup>96</sup>confounded] confounded sometimes.



Aristocracy may either obtain in a Small State like that of Venice where the Nobility can often Meet in council by living in one city or in a large State where the Nobility have large land Estates live<sup>97</sup> in their Castles, surrounded by their Vassals and Dependants whom they can Arm in their own Defence; as in Poland. We may call the first the Ancient Aristocracy the last the Gothic Aristocracy.

Of the first the Venetian Government is the best Model. The Government consists of an Assembly of the whole Nobility A Senate and annual Magistrates. The Senate & Magistracy is chosen by the Assembly<sup>98</sup>

Account of the Constitution of Venice

Account of the Constitution of Poland

Cor 1 In the Gothic Aristocracy every Nobleman will be almost independent of the Laws and must be possessed of the civil & military power in his own territory. The King will be elective and have little or no Power. Every Nobleman will have a negative in the Diet, the people will be slaves to the several Lords.

2 In the Ancient Aristocracy the Nobility will be in perfect Subjection to the Laws, the Whole body will be closely United and the people will not be subject to any particular Lord but to the Laws

[2v] 3 In such a State the Army ought to consist of foreigners hired The city should be secured from the possibility of being attacked by them. The Nobility should be allowed to marry the Daughters of the commons. And should from time to time adopt commoners into their Body.

Democracy cannot Subsist but by delegating a part of their Power to Magistrates and a Senate & to representatives of the peoples.<sup>99</sup> And therefore will coincide with that Mixed kind of Government called a Common Wealth. The Democracies of Athens And Sparta & other Ancient Cities Require a certain equality of Rank among the Citizens

Mixed forms of Government of these I shall Mention three the Republican the Pure Monarchy and the limited Monarchy Of the Republican form of Government the Oceana seems to be the most perfect Model. Which I shall therefore describe. To these mixed Forms add the Gothick. of which a proper Specimen may be the English Government about the Time of Hen 2 See Ld Littletons Hist. of Hen 2 vol 3<sup>d</sup> Apr 23

[3r] The Essays of the Youth. 26 Order

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<sup>97</sup>Estates live] Estates & [live].

<sup>98</sup>Senate ... Assembly] Senate [& Magistracy] ... [Popular] [Assembly].

<sup>99</sup>Senate ... peoples.] Senate [& ... peoples].

## 3. THE REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT: HARRINGTON'S OCEANA

[4/III/7, 1v]

Apr 19

*a. The Principles of a Commonwealth*

## The Principles of a Commonwealth

1 An Agrarian which is the foundation or bottom<sup>100</sup> upon which this Grand Machine must be supported<sup>101</sup>

2 The Constituent parts of it<sup>102</sup> consisting of a Senate proposing the Representative of the people resolving and A Magistracy Executing.

3 The freedom of Voting and Rotation both which are secured by the Ballot.

1 Division of the Citizens into free men and<sup>103</sup> Servants

2 Into Horse and Foot 100 £ pr An. a Horseman He that wasted his Patrimony incapable of Office or Suffrage in the Commonwealth<sup>104</sup>

3 Into Elders and Youth. From 18 to 30 Youth, From 30 Elders  
The Territory into Parishes Hundreds & Tribes

*b. Elections*

The Ballot of the Parish A Proposer chosen by lot

Every person proposed Balloted untill a fifth part be proposed & chosen by ballot.<sup>105</sup> The 1 & 2 Overseers the 3 Constable the 4 & 5 Church Wardens the whole being a fifth part of the Elders are deputies of the parish for a Year. The Deputies the Militia of the Commonwealth

Election of Ministers to vacant parishes<sup>106</sup>  
Apr 22

Such a District as contains about 100 Deputies makes a Hundred

Election of the Hundred, Jury Men Overseers of the Ballot,<sup>107</sup> Justice of the Peace, first Jury man Captain of the Hundred, Ensign those of the horse

<sup>100</sup>foundation or bottom] foundation [ [wh] ] or [Ground] [bottom].

<sup>101</sup>supported] supported [2 An Assembly in whom is the result or whole legislative [and part of the] Judiciary power. Magistrates & A Senate Chosen by the people Accountable to them & going out by a Rotation].

<sup>102</sup>The ... it] The [Superstructure] [Constituent ... it].

<sup>103</sup>and] and [Citizens].

<sup>104</sup>Foot ... Commonwealth] Foot [100 ... Commonwealth]. *Interlinear material whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>105</sup>Balloted ... ballot] Balloted [untill ... ballot].

<sup>106</sup>Election ... parishes. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>107</sup>Hundred ... Ballot] Hundred, [Jury ... Ballot]. *Interlinear material whose placement is conjectural.*

Second Jury man, high Constable, Crowner of the foot

Ballot of the Hundred five Suits of Gold Balls Determined by lot which shall be used. Seven Gold balls put into the ⟨urn⟩ and the seven proposers chosen by lot. Three Competitors proposed for each office first one for each office by each of the proposers then a second &c<sup>108</sup> who must have a Majority of the proposers. The person of the three who has most above half is chosen

Twenty Hundreds make a tribe

Deputies of the Tribe Mustered into Troops & Companies

Command of the Troops and companies allotted to the Captains and Ensigns by lot.

Pavilions with the Urns for horse & foot  
[4/III/6, 2r]

We have given an Account of the Parish Elections in the Commonwealth Of Oceana: By ballot one fifth Part of the Elders of the Parish are chosen, who are called Deputies & who have not served in that office the year before. The two first are the Overseers of the Parish. They are Under Censors, & have the ordering of the Ballot at the next years Election. The third Deputy is Constable of the Parish the 4 & 5 Church Wardens. Officers already known in the Constitution of England

We have likewise described the Manner of the Election of Ministers in this Commonwealth, which is popular as in a Commonwealth it ought to be; And I conceive it is the best form for a Popular Election of Ministers that has ever been contrived Those who contend so earnestly for popular Elections of Ministers among us are for allowing the people to chose upon having heard a Man preach two or three times, which is altogether an insufficient trial for enabling the people to make a true Judgment. Harrington gives them a Years Trial wherein they have access to observe his abilities and diligence in every branch of his office & therefore may make a much more Rational Choice. A Soldier will form a good Judgment of his Officer when he has served a Campaign under him. But if he was desired<sup>109</sup> to form his Judgment onely by seing the behaviour of that officer at a Review, he would think you mocked him, and if he was a sensible man would not pretend to judge upon so insufficient a Trial. Two or three Sermons are as insufficient a trial of the Qualifications of a Minister of a Parish as the figure an Officer makes at a Review is of his military Abilities.

We gave account likewise of the Elections in the Commonwealth of Oceana at the Rendevous of the Hundred, where all the Deputies within that presinct meet

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<sup>108</sup>proposed ... &c] proposers ... office  $\wedge$  [first ... &c].

<sup>109</sup>was desired] was  $\wedge$  [desired].

annually on a day prefixed, & chuse by ballot out of their Number 1 Justice. 1 Jury man. 1 Captain. 1 Ensign. of the Horse & 1 Jury man one high Constable and one Coroner of the foot. The Offices of Justices Jury men<sup>110</sup> Constable & Coroner are well known already in the English Government, & The Captain & Ensign are to serve in their Offices in the Militia. These of the Horse. Jury men half horse half foot

The Parish Elections are annually upon the Monday next answering the last of Dec<sup>r</sup> The Elections of the Hundred upon the Monday next ensuing the last of Jan<sup>y</sup> The Elections of the Tribe come. Next to be explained which are partly of annual Officers partly of triennial. First of the annual Officers of the Tribe. 1 Lord High Sheriff. 2 Lord Lieutenant. 3 Lord Custos Rotulorum Muster Master General. 4 The Conductor 5 & 6 two Censors.

All the Deputies of the tribe in order to make this Election appear in Arms at the Rendevous of the Tribe upon the Monday next ensuing the last of Feb. where they are mustered into Troops of Horse and Companies of foot. By the L H Sh & Cust Rot. from the Lists transmitted to them by the high Constables of the Several Hundreds. The Captains of the 1, 2, 3<sup>d</sup>, Troops & of the 1, 2, 3, &c Companies fixed by drawing gold balls for the horse & Silver for the foot out of an Urn<sup>111</sup>  
[4/III/7, 1r]

Magistrates of the tribe chosen in the first days Election L. H. Sheriff. 2 L Lieutenant 3 L. Custos Rotulorum Must. Mast 4 Conductor being Quarter Master General. 5 & 6 Two Censors

Two lots for the suit of the balls one for the side Urns, Another for the Middle Urn. 24 Electors Chosen by Lot.

In the side Urns 60 Gold Balls divided in proportion to the Number of horse and foot with as many blanks as make up the whole number of horse and foot respectively. Those who draw gold balls at the Side Urns to proceed to the Middle Urn where there are 24 Gold & 36 Silver balls. Those who draw the first six Gold balls are the first Order of Electors & so on. Four orders in all

The Order of the files Outward Inward Middle, in advancing to the Ballot determined by lot

Four Competitors for each Office to be named by the four Orders of Electors. and he that has most above half is chosen

### The Functions of the Magistrates of the Tribes

<sup>110</sup>Justices Jury men] Justices & [Jury men].

<sup>111</sup>We have given ... Urn. *Material whose placement is dictated by context.*

These together with the 20 Justices & 40 Jury men are the Phylarch or Prerogative troop of the Tribe whose offices are 1 They are the Council of the Tribe, 2 Receive the Itinerant Judges 3 To hold<sup>112</sup> the Quarter Sessions. 4 All Commissions issued into the Tribe by the Parliament<sup>113</sup> or Chancery are directed to the Phylarch or some of that troop & executed by them 5 In Levys of Money the Parliament Taxes the Tribes, They the Hundreds and they the parishes, who shall levy it upon themselves. Ten children alive<sup>114</sup> no taxes. Five half taxes. 25 Years & not married or three years and no children double taxes

No Debate in any popular Assembly. The pillar of Nilus

2<sup>d</sup> Day's Election in the Tribe 2 Knights 3 Deputies out of the horse & 4 Deputies out of the foot. No Man to be thus chosen who has not been married Agrarian Law.

*c. The Senate and the Popular Assembly*

Apr 23

Constitution of the Senate

Six Magistrates annually Chosen viz Strateg(u)s Orator, two Censors a third Commissioner of the Seal & a third Commissioner of the Tresaury

Four Councils State War Religion Trade. Dictator Election of Ambassadors in Ordinary<sup>115</sup> Emergent Electors by Scrutiny<sup>116</sup>

Constitution of the Prerogative Tribe or Popular Assembly

Triennial Magistrates one Captain & one Cornet of the third Region of the Horse & One Captain & one Ensign of the foot.

Annual Officers two Tribune of the horse & two of the foot

Provincial Knights and Deputies

*d. Reflections on Harrington's Oceana*

[4/III/6, 1r]

Of Harringtons Oceana

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<sup>112</sup>To hold] To [receive] [hold].

<sup>113</sup>Parliament] Parliament of.

<sup>114</sup>children alive] children  $\wedge$  [alive].

<sup>115</sup>Dictator ... Ordinary] Dictator  $\wedge$  [Election ... Ordinary].

<sup>116</sup>Emergent ... Scrutiny. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is conjectural.*



Every part of this plan is admirable yet there are some things Necessary both to the Establishment and Duration of such a Government, that this excellent Political writer has not adverted to.

1 He lays to great Stress upon the Ballance of property as the onely Source of Dominion<sup>117</sup> Such a Ballance of Property as he prescribes is not sufficient for the Establishment or Continuance of a Republick.

Three Sources of<sup>118</sup> Submission in the Governed 1 The opinion of Power 2 The Opinion of Right 3 The opinion of Wisdom and Virtue & Courage.<sup>119</sup> Any one of these<sup>120</sup> may preserve a Government long where it is not opposed by the others. And it is onely where<sup>121</sup> all three concurr that the Government cannot be<sup>122</sup> changed by the Governed.

The first Supported the Roman Emperors. The second supports most hereditary Monarchys. The third Oliver Cromwel

A.<sup>123</sup> People that believe that they have both the Power and Right in their hands may chuse to submit to Kingly or Monarchical nay even to Despotic Government. 1 From Ignorance of the Evils it tends to produce & want of Experience 2 In order to redress greater Evils 3 From the want of a Sense of Liberty<sup>124</sup> 4 From ignorance of any other form of Government. The People of Israel chusing a King. English recalling the Banished Family. Harringtons prophecy<sup>125</sup> Danes giving up their Liberties.

The Difficulty of totally Changing the Form of a Government even from worse to Better.

It is not probable that O. Cromwell could have established Harringtons commonwealth<sup>126</sup> in England. because of the Attachment of the People to the Old Forms the Hereditary Nobility and the Opinion of<sup>127</sup> the greatest Part of the Right of the R. Family, There

2 The duration of Such a Government as Harrington proposes. Requires the preservation of Morals. the Suppression of Luxury. The inspiring the people with a

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<sup>117</sup>1 ... Dominion] 1 [He lays more stress upon] [He ... Dominion].

<sup>118</sup>of] [Dominion and] [in Governours]].

<sup>119</sup>Virtue & Courage.] Virtue  $\wedge$  [& Courage].

<sup>120</sup>these] these [is suffi].

<sup>121</sup>others ... where] others.  $\wedge$  [And ... where] Where.

<sup>122</sup>cannot be] cannot  $\wedge$  [be].

<sup>123</sup>A. *Meaning unclear.*

<sup>124</sup>Liberty] Liberty [The I].

<sup>125</sup>Family. Harringtons prophecy] Family.  $\wedge$  [Harringtons prophecy].

<sup>126</sup>established Harringtons commonwealth] established a lasting commonwealth  $\wedge$  [Harringtons commonwealth].

<sup>127</sup>of] of [Right].

Spirit of Liberty of Zeal for the Government of Moderation in the Use of Riches of  
Respect to the Laws & Magistrates.

Of the Virtues required in each kind of Government.

[1v] Of Honour & Ignominy in a Republick

of Respect to Magistrates & to Elders

Of Frugality & equal Expence in private persons & buildings

Of Magnificence in Magistrates & in publick buildings

Of publick Education.

Of Industry. Law anent Bankrupts.

How Citizens are to be distinguished from Servants by a Census. &

Character<sup>128</sup> How a Citizen may be degraded. by the Overseers or Censors for a Year.

By a Hundred for life if he has never born Magistracy by a Tribe if he has born

Magistracy in the tribe onely by the popular assembly whatever he is

Of Honours & Titles of Honour. & Precedency.

Precedency and Priviledges of Citizens above Servants

Titles of Honour Conferred onely by the People in the Hundred Tribe or

Parliament, never to descend beyond the third Generation unless renewed.

*e. Concluding Reflections on Harrington's Oceana*

[4r] If the Oceana of M<sup>r</sup> Harrington is considered in itself onely, or if it were once established in a Nation sufficiently enlightned, & not prejudiced against this or in favours of another form of Government. I conceive it to be the best model of Republican Government that has ever been proposed. The Author was a Man of great Genius, he made Politicks his Sole Study and had examined the Constitution of Most States ancient and Modern with a view to discover the Principles of Political Government. He has united in one Uniform and consistent System the best things in all the Ancient Republicks, as well as<sup>129</sup> in that of Venice. I confess I think it difficult to conceive how any part of it could be better contrived, for the time in which he lived either to prevent Sedition among the Subjects,<sup>130</sup> or for defence against forreign Enemies. And I conceive most of those Authors who find fault with Harringtons model of a Commonwealth, not excepting Montesquieu himself, have rather shewn an Inclination to find fault than supported their censures by good Reasons. I shall onely make two observations on this Plan considered in itself & then I shall make some Observation upon it as a plan for the Government of England at the time it was offered

<sup>128</sup>Census. & Character] Census. ^ [& Character].

<sup>129</sup>Republicks ... well as] Republicks, [*illegible character*] [as well as].

<sup>130</sup>Sedition ... Subjects] Sedition [among the Subjects].

1 It may be doubted whether even the Agrarian Law of Harrington be a Sufficient Security against an undue Accumulation of Wealth in the hands of one or a few, and a sufficient security for that Equality among the Citizens which a Republick seems to require. That the Ballance of Power in a State<sup>131</sup> follows the Ballance of Land Property was indeed first Observed by Harrington and is certainly one of the most important discoveries in the Science of Politicks, the honour of which is entirely due to him. But as Harrington acknowledges that there may be some Exceptions to this general rule, there may possibly be others which he did not<sup>132</sup> discover There are some Species of Property now known in Britain which are not restrained by Harringtons Agrarian, whereby men accumulate very great Estates unsuitable to the Nature of a Republican Government.

The publick funds amount to 130,000,000 £ Estates in the Colonies

[4v] 2 It may be doubted whether there is in this Model<sup>133</sup> sufficient provision for preserving that degree of Morals and publick Virtue which is necessary in a Commonwealth.

#### 4. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

[1v] Of Colonies Ancient Modern. The Trade of modern Colonies with the Nations in Cultivating Sugar Indigo Tobacco Pimento Tar Wood Logwood<sup>134</sup> Their Government Limitations of their Trade. Their Influence in the Government and in the House of Commons. The colonies and Great trading Companies have produ(s)ed what is called the Moneyed Interest which seems to bear hard both upon the Landed Interest and the trading Interest. Modern Colonies tend to Depopulation.

#### 5. OTHER COMMONWEALTHS IDEAL OR REAL

The Utopia of Sir Thomas More Paraguay

Population. Education Abbé de St Pierre's Political Collec.<sup>135</sup> National Riches. Trade & Commerce. Easy Conveyance Storehouses.<sup>136</sup> Ballance of forreign Trade Exchange. Money, Banks, Land Bank. Publick Revenue. Customs Excise Pol Tax Sumptuary Laws<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>State] State [that has an extensive land Territory].

<sup>132</sup>not] not [forsee].

<sup>133</sup>is ... Model] is  $\wedge$  [in this Model].

<sup>134</sup>Logwood] Logwood [Lim].

<sup>135</sup>Education ... Collec.] Education  $\wedge$  [Abbé ... Collec.].

<sup>136</sup>Commerce

<sup>137</sup>Of ... Laws. *Placement of material indicated by Reid's list of lecture heads.*

## 6. PURE MONARCHY

[4/III/14, 1r]

There is a certain Character and Temper in the Subjects that suits every Government This has been observed by Montesquieu and it is what he calls the principle of the Several Governments by which he seems to mean onely that the stability and duration of such a Plan of Government requires that the Subjects Should be chiefly actuated by such a Principle.

This Principle in Despotism he makes to be fear in Monarchies Honour in Republicks Virtue

Despotism suits best with the warm Climats. How little reason have we to envy the Aseatics the Temperature of their Air Their Rubies & Diamonds and Silk; Their Spiceries and all the other noble productions of the Climate Let me rather be free and if I should<sup>138</sup> wander in the Wilds of America with the Canadians or Exkimaux and live upon Roots any game rather than be a Slave and wallow in all the Luxury of an Eastern Court.

## Of Pure Monarchy

In this form of Government first described by Montesquieu The Monarch has all the parts of the Supreme power in himself but Exercises it by fixed Laws & Subordinate Powers. It is therefore essential to this Government to have a Register of the Laws. The Parliaments of France described Their Power to remonstrate against. the Kings Edicts.

A Hereditary Nobility with Jurisdictions.

A Standing Army Army of the Nobility Gentry and Peasants

The Law a Separate Profession.

*a. The Leading Principle of the Different Forms of Government*

[2r] What Montesquieu has said with regard to the leading Principle of the differen(t) forms of Government needs Explication and I conceive when properly understood is of great Consequence in Politicks. He Observes that in Despotick Government the Leading principle is fear, in Monarchy Honour, & in Democracy Virtue. For understanding this it is proper to observe that as every Government that is secure and lasting must be in some degree adapted to the principles by which human creatures are commonly influenced in their conduct, so there are some Governments that are more (adapted to) one principle of human Nature others to another. That Principle which is

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<sup>138</sup>rather ... should] rather  $\wedge$  [be ... should].

peculiarly adapted to the Nature of the Government will always be cherished by that and the natural tendency of the Government will be to mould Men into that Character and temper which agrees best with the Nature of the Government On the other hand the More that Principle, that temper and Character prevails which is suited to the Nature of the Government, the more smoothly & easily<sup>139</sup> will the wheels of Government move.

Thus in a Republick the great End of the Government is the common good of the Whole and the Preservation of civil Liberty. That Spirit therefore in the Subjects which is best adapted to this form of Government is the Love their Constitution and the love of Liberty and of the Laws<sup>140</sup> this the true Spirit of a free Government and while this Spirit prevails the Government will be well administered and powerfull against its Enemies. &c Sparta. Athens. Rome.

In a Despotick Government The Arbitrary Will of one Man Moves the whole Machine. And therefore the most abject & tame<sup>141</sup> Submission to the Sovereign is the onely thing that can make such a Government go on smoothly. And Fear or Superstition<sup>142</sup> are the onely principles that can produce such an Abject Submission in a great Empire to the arbitrary will of one. These therefore are the principles of a Despotick Government.

That Principle of Honour which, According to Montesquieu, in a Monarchy supplies the want of Virtue, is nothing else but an Ambition to be distinguished and applauded, a strong<sup>143</sup> desire to cut a figure in the Eyes of men especially of those that are above us in Rank.

[2v] Here a<sup>144</sup> Man is<sup>145</sup> taught that his Virtues ought to be<sup>146</sup> such as shew an elevation of Spirit his Morals ought<sup>147</sup> not to be too strait or Stiff. That his behaviour should allways be frank and Polite.<sup>148</sup> The Virtues which this Principle of Honour inspires are not these which point out our duty to others but such as teach us what a man owes to himself. Not those that draw our affections towards our fellow creatures but those that may give us some distinction & preeminence above them. This Honour does not judge of Actions by their Justice or Utility but by their brilliancy and lustre. It

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<sup>139</sup>smoothly & easily] smoothly  $\wedge$  [& easily].

<sup>140</sup>Liberty ... Laws] Liberty  $\wedge$  [and ... Laws].

<sup>141</sup>abject & tame] abject  $\wedge$  [& tame].

<sup>142</sup>Fear or Superstition] Fear  $\wedge$  [or Superstition].

<sup>143</sup>a strong] a  $\wedge$  [strong].

<sup>144</sup>Here a] Here [a].

<sup>145</sup>Man is] Man [are] [is].

<sup>146</sup>ought to be] ought  $\wedge$  [to be].

<sup>147</sup>Morals ought] Morals [ought].

<sup>148</sup>be ... Polite.] be [attended with a certain] [frank and] Polite[ness].



aims not at real Worth but at Distinction and Fame. Sincerity Modesty Justice Temperance are to the Man of Honour<sup>149</sup> plebeian Virtues, which have little<sup>150</sup> connexion with the Principle of Honour and ought not<sup>151</sup> to stand in its way, when it aims at any thing that spirited<sup>152</sup> and Noble. The Man of Honour to raise his fortune can Supplant the man that confides in him. He can boast of an amorous intrigue with a person of superior rank or of eminent Perfections, the<sup>153</sup> wife of his Friend or benefactor. If he can gain a Post by servile adulation and flattery of one whom in his heart he despises, or by a dexterous piece of Craft & cunning, this is a laudable finesse in which he will<sup>154</sup> glory. His honour requires that his should be open and<sup>155</sup> speak the Truth, not from the love of Sincerity and Truth; By no Means. but because to speak the truth is a Sign of boldness and<sup>156</sup> Courage.

This Principle of Honour always inspires Politeness and Good Breeding. Men of high Rank, in all Countries distinguish themselves by Politeness to their inferiors, the desire of Respect naturally produces this. Every obliging thing which a great man says or does to us is taken as a great favour.<sup>157</sup> It is a very cheap way of acquiring respect and bringing man under obligations. Politeness and good breeding is undoubtedly a most amiable accomplishment, an accomplishment which real Virtue and Humanity ought to inspire, As men are born to live together and mutually to promote each others Satisfaction comfort and happiness. And nothing tends to promote peace harmony and good will in Society than a polite and obliging behaviour in men towards one another. But this amiable Quality does not always proceed from the principles of true Virtue & humanity it is often the offspring of Vanity and the desire of Esteem. In the Monarchical Government there is a Gradation of Rank from the Monarch down to the peasant and day labourer. This kind of Government encourages Ambition and every man as he aspires to a higher Rank emulates the Manners of those that are above him.<sup>158</sup>

[1r] Ambition and the Love of Honour encouraged.

A Martial Spirit

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<sup>149</sup>are ... Honour] are [one word illegible] [to ... Honour].

<sup>150</sup>have little] have no [little].

<sup>151</sup>Honour ... not] Honour [nor] [and] ought [not].

<sup>152</sup>that spirited] that [grand] [spirited].

<sup>153</sup>the] the the.

<sup>154</sup>he will] he [will].

<sup>155</sup>should ... and] should ^ [be open and].

<sup>156</sup>of boldness and] of ^ [boldness and].

<sup>157</sup>favour] favour [by us].

<sup>158</sup>What ... him. *Passagemarked A whose arrangement (That ... Rank precedes What ... him) is indicated by lines drawn by Reid and by sense and whose placement is indicated by Reid's instruction Add A in left-hand margin next to Profession.*

The Glory of the Monarch substituted in place of the love of ones Country.

[1v] The Monarch must be hereditary and the Succession regulate by fundamental laws<sup>159</sup> must appear to his people. He must be gracious and affable to all about him. Keep A Splendid Court He must if possible add the Glory of a Conqueror to his other Titles<sup>160</sup> Encourage the Nobility to live at Court to Spend their Fortunes in high living and to have a dependance, by Places in the Army and Civil Government. He ought to be an encourager of Learning. Acts of Clemency should belong to him, but Acts of Severity or Justice be always left to his Courts.

Taxes ought to be farmed but not to the Nobility or Army,

Every man should depend upon the Court and expect to rise by its favour. and look upon disgrace at Court as the greatest of all Evils.

Such a Monarchy is apt to grow is very dangerous to its Neighbours. Difficult to Conquer. Learning And Arts may flourish in it. but Commerce will never meet with great Encouragement.

It may degenerate into Despotism by crushing the Nobility and taking away their Jurisdictions 2 By taking away the priviledges of Parliaments. & their independency The power of the Monarch may be diminished. 1 By the Subjects being more enlightned. By Unsuccessfull Wars or bad administration. By Minoritys By a disputed Succession and Pretenders to the Throne

### ***b. Reflections on the French Monarchy***

#### Reflexions on the French Monarchy

Its Power very great and all its Neighbours, we in particular ought to be jealous of it. Its power had been greater had it not been for the Ambition of its Monarchs. Lewis 14. The Present King. The most pacific Kings lay the foundation of its Strength. Monastries and Nunneries weaken it

## 7. THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION

[4/III/11, 1r]

### Of Monarchy

1 The french Monarchy a Model of Pure Monarchy

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<sup>159</sup>Monarch ... laws] Monarch  $\wedge$  [must ... laws].

<sup>160</sup>Court ... Titles] Court [He ... Titles].

## Aristocracies

Poland. The United Provinces Venice.

## Republick

Harringtons Oceana

## Constitution of Brittain

### Distribution of the Supreme Power

#### *a. The Judiciary*

Judiciary. Nomination of Judges Various Judicatories. Power of Juries their Nomination & Election. Office of the Judge. Subordination of Courts Supreme Judicature. Attainders.

#### *b. Legislative Power*

Legislative Power. 1 King Hereditary preferable to Elective Rules of Succession.<sup>161</sup> No reason for Excluding the Female Line. Popish heirs excluded & those who marry Papists inconvenient to marry Subjects.<sup>162</sup> The King can do no Wrong Prerogative Revenue.<sup>163</sup>

Peers. Hereditary except in Scotland. Ought to have a Considerable Share of the Landed Interest. Are an Intermediate Power that Binds the King & Commons together. And therefore ought to have an Interest both in preserving the Liberties of the People. & the Prerogative of the Crown. The Place of Extinct Families should be Supplied from Time to time from the Richest of the Commons. Nobles & Commons ought to Marry. And the Younger Sons of the Peers to be Commoners The<sup>164</sup> King can make Peers but cannot unmake them

The Constitution of Electors of the House of Commons. ought to be such as to make them an Equal Representative. Some Inequalities arise 1 From the decay of Burroughs once great. 2 From the Improvement of Land Rents 3 From excluding these that Hold of Subjects. The Nature of Holdings and of the Feudal Law. The

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<sup>161</sup>Elective ... Succession.] Elective  $\wedge$  [Rules of Succession.].

<sup>162</sup>Subjects.] Subjects. [Reason Sound.].

<sup>163</sup>Prerogative Revenue. *Interlinear material whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>164</sup>The] The [Nomination of Pee] the.

changes that have happned in it. The inconveniense of having the Superiority divided from the Property among Subjects.

The Constitution with regard to Elections. Enlisting of Barrons & Power of Head Courts. Power of the Sherrif in Returns. Controverted Elections Removing of Military force from the place of Elections

[1v] The Meetings of the Legislature. The calling & prorogation of the Parliamene belongs to the Crown. Because their Sitting Constantly is not Necessary. This prerogative checked by the Expençe of the Government being provided from Year to year. Estimates for the Publick laid always before the House of Commons Money Bills must take their Rise there & not be altered or *(one word illegible)* elsewhere.<sup>165</sup> Liberty of Speech. & Liberty of Access to the King. Liberty to Impeach any Subject. The Lords ought to Judge in Impeachments. The Speaker of the House The Order of Passing Bills The first Second & third Reading Engrossing. The Order of Debate & of Voting by the house Dividing<sup>166</sup> Committee of the Whole House. Conference in the Painted Chamber.

The Accounts of Public Expences & of the Public Debt. ly on the Table

The Habeas Corpus Act & its Suspension. Liberty of the Press. Tolleration. Papists

The Forms of Sitting & Proceeding in the House of Lords. Wool Sacks

Acts of Pardon & Oblivion take their Rise from the Crown & have one Reading in each house

By Laws of Corporations Justices of the Peace & Commissioners of Supply & the Limits of their Power & Jurisdiction.

### *c. Executive Power*

Executive Power. Over the Army Kings Legislative Raises & dissolves it.<sup>167</sup> The Nomination to all Military Offices. restrained to protestants. Military Discipline regulated by the Mutiny Act. Army has the same Interest as the Subjects in General<sup>168</sup>

Making War Treaties Naming Ambassadors. Naming Officers of the Excise & Customs. Justices of the Peace Commissioners of Supply. All the Judges Bishops.

The Officers of the Navy. Officers of the Crown

Of Political<sup>169</sup>Parties in the British Constitution Natural Accidental

Religious Parties Their Association with Political Ones Natural & Accidental

<sup>165</sup>there ... elsewhere.] there  $\wedge$  [& ... elsewhere].

<sup>166</sup>Debate ... Dividing] Debate  $\wedge$  [& ... Dividing].

<sup>167</sup>Army ... it.] Army  $\wedge$  [Kings ... it].

<sup>168</sup>Act ... General] Act. [Army ... General].

<sup>169</sup>Of Political] Of  $\wedge$  [Political].

*d. Defects or Inconveniencies in the British Constitution*

## Defects or Inconveniencies in the British Constitution

- [2r] 1 The Preservation of it Depends on the Preserving a Ballance of King Lords & Commons who have or may Apprehend they have Different & Contrary Interests & various Accidents may alter this Ballance. Concessions made to a Good King may be abused by a Bad one. The House of Commons may be weakened by the Inequality of the Representative The Kings Power Increased by the Augmentation of the Revenue, the Multiplication of Places.
- 1 The British Constitution lays a foundation for the Division of the State into 2 Parties who may be Called the Court & Country Party There are 3 Interests in the State King Lords & Commons. The 2<sup>d</sup> is not so considerable as to form a third Party but divides into the other two. The Parties in the Roman State Patricians & Plebeians Three things must occasion this Division in our Government 1 The different apprehensions of those who wish well to the Constitution. & act from publick<sup>170</sup> principles. 2 The interested views of those that want to keep their places or to get into places therefore arise from the Nature of the Constitution 3 The designs of those that are Enemies to the Constitution or to the Administration Neither the One nor the Other of these parties is always in the Wrong<sup>171</sup> Accidental Parties Whig & Torry. The Jacobite & Revolutioner Church Man & Dissenter High & Low Church. Associations of Parties sometimes Natural sometimes Accidental Papist or High Church<sup>172</sup> Arminian & Courtier. Puritan Calvinist & Republican or Countryman High Church & Torry Low Church Dissenter & Whig. Since the Revolution Torry & Jacobite & High Church. & Anticourtier, Whig Revolutioner. Low Church or Dissenter In Scotland Jacobite & Episcopalian. Revolutioner & Presbyterian Jacobites a Faction Revolutioners Not so Distinction between a Party & Faction. See Rapin Diss. on Whigs & Torries. Bullinbroke Diss on Parties Cleghorn's Discourse.
- 2 The British Constitution lays a foundation for Corruption or undue Influence in Elections and Nominations which may be used by the Ministry or by the Candidates<sup>173</sup> to Offices & to faction in<sup>174</sup> those that would be in it. A place at Court often got by Opposition to the Administration rather than by serving the

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<sup>170</sup>from publick] from [good] [publick].

<sup>171</sup>Wrong] Wrong [2 The British Constitution].

<sup>172</sup>Papist ... Church] Papist ^ [or High Church].

<sup>173</sup>Nominations ... Candidates] Nominations ^ [which ... Candidates].

<sup>174</sup>in] in in.



Nation. and kept by serving the Administration rather than serving the Public.  
The giving of a Place to a Demagogue in our Constitution answers to the  
Ostracism of the Athenians

- 3 The Commons unequally represented<sup>175</sup> The preservation of our Constitution depends on keeping the Ballance even between the three parts of the Legislature. Chiefly between the King & Commons which seems to be a ticklish thing. 1 What adds Weight to the Kings Scale. Personal Abilities. Long uninterrupted hereditary Succession: connexion with forreign Princes<sup>176</sup> The Civil List the Number of Places & Pensions in his Disposal. besides the parts that are more fixed. viz his Executive Power & his Part in the Legislative. Trade brings an increase of Property to the Commons & to that Part of them that will always be most zealous for Liberty. The power of giving or withholding money their great Security Whether the Crown could Stand without the Dependance that the Commons have on it Whether the Ballance of the British Government inclines more to Liberty or Despotism See Hume Essay on the Independancy of Parliaments<sup>177</sup> on the above Quest.

- [2v] 4 The British Constitution has a tendency to a Corruption of Morals & seems to have no sufficient provision against that. The Corruption of Morals grows from the Influence of And Example of a Court. the Manner in which Elections & Nominations to offices are carried on The Number of Oaths the Profanation of the Sacraments n being made a Qualification to a place. The Abuse of Liberty of Speech & of the Press its degenerating into a Spirit of Libertinism.<sup>178</sup> The Contempt of Religion & of the Clergy. The Numbers that live a City Life The increase of Trade which makes every thing be bought & Sold How far it is in the Power of a King & Court to stop the Progress of Vice by their Example Influence Strict Execution of the Laws against Immorality. By its Power in Universitys & the Church & in the Disposal of Places The Censorial Power in Ancient Republicks how far capable of being revived. Whether a Proper Church Discipline might Supply its place & how far the Clergy might be entrusted with this Power. Of the Education Election & deprivation of Clergymen. The Constitution of the Churches both of Scotland & England has a tendency to Corruption of Morals among the Clergy. Which must be followed by Corruption

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<sup>175</sup>The ... represented. *Interlinear material whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>176</sup>Succession ... Princes] Succession: [connexion ... Princes].

<sup>177</sup>Parliaments] Parliaments [Wheth].

<sup>178</sup>Press ... Libertinism.] Press [its ... Libertinism].

among the people — — The Encouragement of Rural Life & making it free and independent tends to preserve the Morals of a People

5. A certain Degree of corruption of Morals Makes a people incapable of free Government. & therefore the br<sup>179</sup>

*e. Reflections*

[4/III/8, 1r]

Apr 28

We began to consider the Constitution of the Government of Great Britain, which if we may rely upon the Judgment of Montesquieu the greatest political Writer that either ancient or modern times have produced, is more admirably fitted for preserving the liberty of the Subject than any other<sup>180</sup> form of government<sup>181</sup> that ever existed. or even any model<sup>182</sup> that ever was proposed<sup>183</sup> even the Oceana itself.

Harrington says that Author has in his Oceana examined to how high a pitch political Liberty may possibly be carried, but one may say that while he searched for this Liberty in his Model of a Commonwealth he had it before his eyes in the real constitution of his Country, and that he built Chalcedon in the Sight of Byzantium. perhaps however Montesquieu did not consider that the Brit Constitution was not the same when Harrington wrote as it is now.<sup>184</sup> I do not affirm says he that the extreme degree of liberty which is to be found in this constitution ought to mortifie those who enjoy Liberty onely in a moderate degree. An excess of the best things is not always desirable and human Nature suits itself better to a mediocrity than to the extremes even of things that are good. Yet this admirable Plan of Government in which every british man glories, and for which the most enlightened of other nations do envy us; was never contrived by any Lawgiver, it is the work of time and of Accidents The generosity and Courage of the British Nation impatient of tyranny has always made them shake it off when they began to feel it and make such changes in their Political System as seemed most proper for preventing for the future the grievances they had already felt.

It is one of the advantages of this Government that we may freely philosophize about the principles of Policy and even of our own Government as well as about every other object of human knowledge. A happiness which is not enjoyed in an equal

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<sup>179</sup>br. *Passage ends abruptly here.*

<sup>180</sup>any other] any ^ [other].

<sup>181</sup>government] government [ancient or modern].

<sup>182</sup>any model] any [form] [model].

<sup>183</sup>was proposed] was [dileneated] [proposed].

<sup>184</sup>perhaps ... now. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is indicated by Reid's caret, which is keyed to one next passage in margin.*

Degree under any other Government Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Loix* was burnt in France & he as well as the other best political writers of that Nation do not chuse to own what they write. In Brittain we see that the Subjects have not onely the Liberty to canvass the form of Government but to arraign the administration of it in a manner that never was permitted on any other Government under heaven. This liberty indeed has of late been much abused & it is to be wished that the abuse of it may not make it necessary to lay some restraint upon it. But there is no Restraint upon a calm and candid Philosophical Discussion of the Principles of our happy Constitution, nor even on pointing out the Defects and weak sides of it that those who have it in their Power may apply the proper Remedies

### *f. The Nobility*

[2r] Lords Spiritual 2 Arch 24 Bishops. & formerly 26 Abbots & 2 Priors All these hold or are Supposed to hold certain ancient Barronies of the King in virtue of which they have their Seats in the House of Peers.

It is of no Consequence whether we make the Lords Spiritual & Temp. two Estates or one. The Lords Temporal consist of all the Peers of the Realm for the Bishops although Lords of Parliament are not Peers. The Peers are distinguished by their different Titles of Nobility Dukes Marquises Earls Vicounts Barons.

#### *(i) Titles of the Nobility*

A Hereditary<sup>185</sup> Nobility necessary in a Limited Monarchy. Equally inconsistent with Despotism & a Republick Necessary that they should be an independant and Separate Branch of the Legislature.

1 Duke Dux<sup>186</sup> Originally signified the General or leader of an Army. Came to be made a Title of Honour first of the Continent & the fashion spread into Britain. From the time of the Norman Conquest till Edw 3 No Dukes in England probably because the Kings were Dukes of Normandy. but when Edw 3 claimed to be King of France he made his Son Edward the Black Prince and this dignity was afterwards bestowed upon others chiefly of the Royal Family In the Reign of Q Eliz no Dukes Villiers Duke of Buckingham the first after that. 1620

2 Marquess Marches. Originally a Lord of the Marches.

3 Earl. Ealderman Comes. Sometime after the Conquest called Counts. Sherriff of a Shire<sup>187</sup> In Writs Commissions and other formal Instruments any Peer of the

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<sup>185</sup>A Hereditary] A  $\wedge$  [Hereditary].

<sup>186</sup>Duke Dux] Duke  $\wedge$  [Dux].

<sup>187</sup>Shire] Shire [Wr].

Degree of an Earle is stiled by the King his trusty and well beloved Cousin. The Rise of this Custom from Hen 4

4 Viscount or Vice Comes. originally the Deputy of the Earl in his Government of a Shire

5 Baron. Originally every Lord of a Mannor who had Jurisdiction in his Mannour or the priviledge of holding a Baron Court was a Baron. And all such Barons as held of the King had a right to sit in the great Council of the Nation. About the time of King John it came (to) be in use that the King called onely the greater Barons in Person and the lesser Barons were Summoned by the Sherrif to sit by their Representatives in another House, which gave Rise to the Separation of the two houses of Parliament. By degrees the tittle of Baron came to be confined to those who were called by the Kings Writ to the upper House and in Richard the seconds time it was made a meer tittle of Honour by his conferring it on divers persons by his Letters patents

The Right of Peerage originally territorial. Instance the Bishops. & in Hen 6 the Castle of Arundel was adjudged to confer<sup>188</sup> an Earldom on its Possessor. But when alienations became frequent the dignity of Peerage became Personal.

*(ii) Privileges of the Nobility*

### Privilidges of the Nobility

1 In Criminal Cases a Nobleman must be tried by his Peers. Sitting in Judgment they give their Verdict not upon Oath but upon their Honour. But when called as Witnesses are Sworn Scandalum Magnatum. Can lose their Nobility onely by Death or Attainder. One Instance of a Degradation by act of Parliament.

Scotch Peers. 16 chosen by Ballot. this a Temporary Expedient which ceases when the Number is reduced to 16.

House of Commons Their Priviledge to their Persons 40 days before and after the Session Money bills take their Rise there. Qualifications of the Electors, of the Elected. Manner of Election

[2v] By Statutes of 8. & 10 Hen 6. The Knights of the Shires shall be chosen by the people dwelling in the same Counties having freehold to the value of 40 sh a year within the county which by subsequent Statutes must be free of all charges and deductions except Parliamentary and Parochial taxes. freehold i.e. for term of life at least. 40 shill at that time equal at least to 20 £ now The Estate must have been

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<sup>188</sup>confer] confer the.

assessed to some land tax ⟨aid⟩ at least 12 Months before Elected Knights must have 600 £ p<sup>r</sup> An. free or copyhold Estate Burgesses 300 £ Many Restrictions to lessen the Influence of the Crown in Elections.

Method of Elections.

Method of passing Bills

Adjournment Prorogation and dissolution

Impeachments Attainders Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

### C. Police

#### 1. INTRODUCTION, WITH DIGRESSION ON POLITICAL JURISPRUDENCE

[4/III/9, 1r]

May 6 1765

The primary Object of the Science of Politicks is the Constitution of a State, and the natural Effects and consequences of that Constitution and this capital<sup>189</sup> part of the Political Science may be reduced to these two Problems. First a Constitution or form of Government being given to point out the Natural Effects and Consequences of that Constitution Whether for Instance it will be lasting or of short duration, whether powerfull against forreign Enemies or weak and Easy to be conquered, whether internally quiet and peceable or turbulent and Seditious, whether the Subjects will be oppressed or enjoy the common Rights and Liberties which mankind are entitled to. The second Problem is having given the End for which a Constitution of Government is intended to point out that Constitution or Model of Government which<sup>190</sup> will most effectually promote and secure this end. It is very obvious that the End of Government ought to be the good and happiness of the Governed. And therefore every Form or Model of Government if we judge of it by the moral Standart is to be more or less approved of according as it tends more or less to promote this end.

#### *Digression on political government*

A despotick Monarch may have many Ends that are no wise connected with the good of his people nay that are directly contrary to them. An Aristocracy may also have ends which are contrary to the good and happiness of their Subjects, and to agrandize themselves may grievously oppress the lower ranks of Men. It is onely<sup>191</sup> a representative of the people who<sup>192</sup> can have no interest inconsistent with the happiness of the whole political Society. Therefore I apprehend that we may safely

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<sup>189</sup>capital] capital [Branch].

<sup>190</sup>which] which [is best].

<sup>191</sup>onely] onely ∧ [such].

<sup>192</sup>who] who [for].



affirm that no form of<sup>193</sup> Government can be reconciled the principles of sound Morals in which the people or such a representative of the people as cannot have a different Interest from the whole have not the Legislative power or such a share of it as that they may not be subjected to laws that are grievous to them without their consent.

There are two things essential to every Government which we can approve of as consistent with the rights of Mankind and the ends of Government First that it be a Government of Laws and not of Men. Without this no man can know what is his own or what he has a right to expect from others. I had rather be left in the State of Nature to vindicate my Rights by the vigor of my arm and the assistance of my friends, than in a State of Society heave my Rights depend upon the will of a Man, who is tied down by no<sup>194</sup> law in his Judgment. The will of a Man is liable to be influenced by various motives bad as well as good by lust avarice ambition and revenge and partial favour,<sup>195</sup> as well as by Justice equity and Mercy.<sup>196</sup> A Man is a being compounded of Reason and Passion, and in most men the last principle is often prevalent over the first. But the Law is Reason without Passion. Its determinations are always the same in like cases and it favours the plaintiff no more than the defendant. A man may trust his rights with a Judge who is [1v] obliged to pass Sentence according to law & is liable to severe punishment if he does otherwise, for the same reason as a man will trust his money with a man whom he can compell to restore it if he should have a mind to keep it. A man who has no reason to doubt of the integrity of his Debtor, yet<sup>197</sup> when he lends him A Sum of Money takes a Security by which he has it in his power to compell the debtor or his heirs to make just Restitution. And no Debtor however honest takes it ill that men who entrust him with their Money should take such a Security. In like a Man who is judge of my Life and fortune ought to give some Security for his Judging equitably. And there can be no such security if there be no Law according to which he is obliged to Judge. There can therefore be no equitable Government without Laws. And all Despotick Government is in its very Constitution injurious to the Rights of Mankind because it assumes the power of Judging of Mens lives and Fortunes without giving any Security of its Judging according to Equity. But Secondly there is another thing Essential to every Government which is consistent with the Rights of Mankind and that is that the Laws be framed and directed with a view to the good & happiness of the Subject.<sup>198</sup> If the Laws are not directed to this

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<sup>193</sup>no form of] no  $\wedge$  [form of].

<sup>194</sup>by no] by  $\wedge$  [no].

<sup>195</sup>revenge ... favour,] revenge  $\wedge$  [and partial favour].

<sup>196</sup>Mercy.] Mercy. [But the law.].

<sup>197</sup>yet] yet [takes].

<sup>198</sup>the Subject.] the [governed] [Subject].

End Iniquity may be established by a law, the laws themselves may be iniquous and unjust and contrary to the rights of Mankind. It is possible that lawgivers may mistake the publick good even when they intend it. But such mistakes are commonly discovered by Experience and if the Law is very grievous the grievance will be felt and may be remedied. But where the publick good is not intended there is no remedy to be expected. And such Government is iniquous and contrary to the rights of Mankind. Even that Dominion which we assume over the Brute Animals which serve us<sup>199</sup> such as sheap oxen horses & dogs could hardly be reconciled to the principles of Morality, if their life was upon the whole made more unhappy by that Dominion. Far less can any Government of a few over the rest of the human Species be justified if it is not directed to the good and happiness of the Governed. For there is in human Government no Superiority of Nature in the Governors, as there is in mankind over the brutes. Every Government therefore which is not directed to promote the good of the Governed is a Usurpation without Right nor can any Length of Time give it a just Tittle. The people may be subject through fear or through ignorance. But if they are sufficiently enlightned to understand the Rights that belong to them as men, And if at the same time they have it in their power to shake it off and to establish a better and more equitable Government, I have no doubt but they have as good Right to do it as a man has to defend himself against a highwayman.<sup>200</sup> They need not search into ancient Records or Usages to prove their Right to be free and happy. Every man is born with this Right and if all his ancestors from Adam had agreed to deprive him of this Right, this cannot [2r] weaken it, altho it may put him in such circumstances as that it is not in his power to assert and vindicate his Right.<sup>201</sup>

*Introduction resumes*

The chief ends of Political Society Security from forreign Enemies and<sup>202</sup> the maintenance of Peace and justice among the Subjects, these Ends are to be attained by a proper form and Model of Government. But there are also Subordinate ends of Political Society the attainment of<sup>203</sup> which tho not necessary to the being or continuance of it may yet conduce greatly to its well being and Prosperity. The proper means of Promoting this care likewise an object of the Science of Politicks. I cannot pretend to enumerate all these far less to Insist upon them. The chief of them may I

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<sup>199</sup>us] us [could].

<sup>200</sup>highwayman.] highwayman. [Every man].

<sup>201</sup>A ... Right. *Passage about which Reid has here written the following:* All that is marked in the Margin in the two preceeding pages by a line drawn from top to bottom belongs to Political Jurisprudence.

<sup>202</sup>and] and [against or].

<sup>203</sup>Society ... of] Society [the attainment of].

think be reduced to these heads. Population. Virtue, Learning, Riches & Opulence, Publick Revenue and Arms.

## 2. OF POPULATION

The Importance of Population. In some States it<sup>204</sup> may be left to the Course of Nature. In Some States laws and Customs obtain to prevent it. Exposing of Children. One of a family marrying Persecution.<sup>205</sup> Reasons of the defects in Population in Modern Governments.

Two methods of Population 1 By admitting and Naturalizing forreigners Effects of this in Holland. Of a Naturalization Bill in England. Colonies made up in a great Measure of forreigners. disadvantages of forreigners both at home and in the Colonies

2 By encouraging marriage or rather removing the discouragements to it which arise from the improvements of Society. High Living high Land Rent, dearth of the necessaries of life high taxes upon the poor Leudness & prostitution<sup>206</sup> The Rate of the Natural Increase of Mankind when these impediments are removed, is to double in 25 years

- 1 Many ancient Nations found themselves too populous The population of the Earth owing to this.<sup>207</sup> The Reasons 1 The want of the Arts necessary for subsisting many upon the territory of the State 2 The want of traffick which brings men Subsistence from all the Corners of the Earth. 3 The small degree of industry or riches necessary to maintain a family before luxury took place<sup>208</sup> made them propagate faster and fewer live unmarried
- 2 Modern States find a great want of Population. Causes 1 They can maintain more people & make their Numbers turn to account. 2 Monastries Nunneries & Celibacy of Clergy 3 Luxury & high living which prevents many from marrying & makes Women less fruitfull. 4 The Waste of Men in Standing Armies Navies and long Voyages. 5 The great Number of horses kept for riding on horseback or in Wheel Carriages & for other Articles of Luxury.

## 3. OF NATIONAL VIRTUE

[2v] May 7 1765

We have considered the importance of Population in a State and the proper means of promoting it. And we are next to consider the importance of Virtue in a State and the

<sup>204</sup>some States it] some [Governmen] [States it].

<sup>205</sup>marrying Persecution.] marrying  $\wedge$  [Persecution].

<sup>206</sup>Leudness & prostitution] Leudness  $\wedge$  [& prostitution] [among the].

<sup>207</sup>populous ... this.] populous  $\wedge$  [The ... this].

<sup>208</sup>family ... place] family  $\wedge$  [before ... place].

Means by which it may be most effectually promoted. We do not here intend to consider the importance of Virtue in a moral or Religious but onely in a political Light. That Virtue is the highest Excellence of a Man that it contributes more than all other things put together to make a man usefull to others and happy in himself in the present Life and is the onely mean of securing happiness in the life to come; these are no doubt truths of the highest importance, but they do not belong to our present Argument which leads us onely to consider how far Virtue is necessary or conducive towards making men good citizens or good Members of a State. As far as it is so it deserves the Care and Attention of the Legislator, and he neglects an important part of his province if he takes no Care of it.

It appears to be very certain that all wise Schemes of Political Government suppose men to be neither perfectly virtuous nor perfectly vicious & profligate if men were perfectly virtuous there would be little Use for political Government men would live very happily without it, they would onely need to know their duty in order to do it and would not need to be compelled to it by laws & sanctions. on the other hand if all the members of a state were as wicked and profligate as some individuals are no Scheme of Government would be sufficient to hold them together, the Society behoved to disband, every individual would be as a beast of prey to the rest and they would mutually destroy each other. All political Government therefore supposes human Nature to be in some middle State between these extreme degrees of Virtue and vice. And indeed it has always been so in the bulk of Mankind. and we have no reason to believe that there is any nation on the face of the Earth where the whole or the greater part are so extreemly wicked and so abandoned as some individuals in every nation may be found to be But between the extremes of Virtue and vice which may one hand make Political Government unnecessary or on the other hand make it impossible there are a great many different degrees of Corruption of Morals in the body of a State which may make political Government more or less easy and<sup>209</sup> more or less secure and quiet.

Montesquieu conceives that fear without Virtue is sufficient to support a Despotick Government, that<sup>210</sup> a principle of honour without Virtue is sufficient to support a pure Monarchy such as that of France but he conceives that a Republick cannot Subsist without Virtue. I agree with this Author that a greater degree of Virtue is necessary in a Republick or in any free Government than in a Despotick Government or pure Monarchy

[3r] The means of promoting and preserving Virtue in a State

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<sup>209</sup>less easy and] less [difficult *one word illegible*] [easy and].

<sup>210</sup>that] that [honour].

- 1 Good Education. Publick Schools properly endowed and provided.
- 2 Execution of the Laws against Vice and Immorality.
- 3 Zeal & Strictness of Life in the<sup>211</sup> Ministers of Religion & Magistrates
- 4 Care of the Army and Navy. Learning and Arts

#### 4. OF NATIONAL RICHES

- 1 What is to be called Riches in a Nation?
- 2 Food and Rayment, Houses Furniture Lands. How far Riches
- 3 The Riches of the Whole is the Sum of the Riches of Individuals
- 4 As every Mans Riches is the Ballance between his Goods & his Debt so it is in a Nation.  
What things have influence on the Price of Commodities or of Labour & skill

#### Of National Riches

[4/III/15, 1r]

- 1 Def By Riches I mean The Possession & Property of alienable things by<sup>212</sup> which human life is Supported or its Pleasure or Happiness<sup>213</sup> increased, either really or in the Common opinion.
- 1 There are things which the Earth Spontaneously affords that come under the Denomination of Riches. Grottos<sup>214</sup> Caves or Groves for Shelter. Wood for Various Uses<sup>215</sup> Some fruits and animals for food Water for drink Skins of Beasts for Cloathing some Gold & other things which it is Needless to Enumerate
- 2 But the far greatest part of what may be called Riches is produced<sup>216</sup> by human Laboar & Industry. Food & drink Wearing Houses Utensils Tame Animals Metals Wood Machines Vehicles Jewels &c. And the Riches produced by Labour in every Civilized State do so far exceed the Spontaneous productions of the Earth that the latter may pass almost for Nothing Compared with the former The Earth affords the Materials but it is Labour & Industry that gives them form &<sup>217</sup> the far greatest part of their Worth

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<sup>211</sup>the] the [teachers].

<sup>212</sup>mean ... by] mean [Every] [The ... alienable] things by [the Consumption of].

<sup>213</sup>Happiness] Happiness  $\wedge$  [[in the common opinio(n)].

<sup>214</sup>Grottos] [*one word illegible*] [Grottos].

<sup>215</sup>Shelter ... Uses] Shelter.  $\wedge$  [Wood ... Uses].

<sup>216</sup>is produced] is  $\wedge$  [produced] [got].

<sup>217</sup>&] & [makes].



- 3 Yet some parts of the Earth afford greater variety of Materials or such<sup>218</sup> as are brought to perfection with less labour. And in this Respect the Warm Climates are generally preferable to the Colder, which<sup>219</sup> require more Labour & Industry in their Inhabitants
- 4 A great deal of the Riches produced by labour must be consumed by Use<sup>220</sup> by time or Accidents.
- 5 The Whole Acquired<sup>221</sup> Riches of the Human Race consists of the Overplus of what is produced by Labour above what is Consumed
- 6 A Man that in the Course of his Life produced more by his Labour than what he consumes makes the World Richer by the Overplus
- 2 Def N.B. I reckon a Mans consumption not onely what he consumes by use but what Perishes in his custody by Time or accidents.
- 7 A Man that in the Course of his Life consumes more than he produces by his Labour makes the World poorer by the Overplus
- 8 The Riches of the Human Race will allwase Rise or fall in the Compound proportion of the usefull Labour & Industry Directly and the Consumpt Reciprocally.<sup>222</sup>
- [1v] 9 Altho every thing that can be called Riches was originally produced by the Labour of some Body (excepting the Spontaneous productions of the Earth which are altogether Inconsiderable) Yet being by their Nature alienable they<sup>223</sup> are frequently found, in the possession of those that never produced them
- 10 Riches may be alienate either<sup>224</sup> Involuntarily by force or fraud,<sup>225</sup> or Voluntarily by gift bargain or Exchange.
- 3 Def Where Riches are given in Exchange for other Riches Supposed to be of equal Value Such a Transaction is called Commerce  
What a Man produces by his Labour or purchases with a View to Employ it in Commerce is called a Commodity<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>218</sup>such] such such.

<sup>219</sup>Colder, which] Colder, [And] [which].

<sup>220</sup>Use] Use [or Perish].

<sup>221</sup>Whole Acquired] Whole  $\wedge$  [Acquired].

<sup>222</sup>Reciprocally.] Reciprocally. [9 Riches].

<sup>223</sup>they] they [must often fall].

<sup>224</sup>either] either [by f].

<sup>225</sup>force or fraud,] force [or] fraud, [Servitude].

<sup>226</sup>What ... Commodity. *Material written vertically in left-hand margin from top to bottom of page whose placement is conjectural.*

- 11 The Comparative Value of Different Commodities is influenced by so many Things that it is extremely Difficult if not impossible to settle it by any General Rules.
- 12 If one<sup>227</sup> Nation had the Sole property of any Necessary of Life that Nation might oblige all others to<sup>228</sup> give what they pleased to demand that is to be their Servants
- 13 But when the Necessarys or Conveniencys<sup>229</sup> of Life are in Many different hands that have Separate Interests. & cannot combine to fix a price upon their Commodities. Every one is divided betwixt the desire of a high price & the fear of having his Commodity ly on his hands while others vend theirs at a lower price. The Buyer is agitated by like hopes and fears as the Seller. however bargains will be Struct. Some at a higher price some at a lower till at last after vibrating for a while the price will Settle nearly<sup>230</sup> at a Medium betwixt the highest and lowest.
- 14 The most Equal Value of Commodities is that which enables those that produce them by their Labour to purchase all the Conveniencies and Accommodations of Life which labourers of<sup>231</sup> that kind are by the Customs & Opinions of the Country entitled to.
- 4 Def Altho the Value of Commodities as defined in the last Article by very Variable according to the Customs or Opinions of different nations or of the same Nation at different times Yet since we cannot find any more equal or Natural Standart of the Value of Commodities we shall call this their Natural Value.
- 15 When Commodities have once come to settle at their Natural<sup>232</sup> price, That price cannot be afterwards increased (if we exclude Monopolies & Combinations of the Sellers or Buyers but by<sup>233</sup> an Increase of the Demand or Decrease of the Commodity [2r] In either of these cases the fear of<sup>234</sup> the Commodity lying on hand decreases in the Seller & makes him insist on a greater price. The buyer is prompted to offer a higher price lest the Commodity be all taken up by other buyers. A General opinion of the Increase of the Demand or Decrease of the

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<sup>227</sup>one] one [Man or].

<sup>228</sup>to] to [be their Servants and].

<sup>229</sup>Necessarys or Conveniencys] Necessarys  $\wedge$  [or Conveniencys].

<sup>230</sup>Settle nearly] Settle  $\wedge$  [nearly].

<sup>231</sup>of] of [their].

<sup>232</sup>once ... Natural] once [a Settled]  $\wedge$  [come ... Natural].

<sup>233</sup>but by] but  $\wedge$  [by].

<sup>234</sup>of] of [one word illegible].

Commodity will have the same Effect for a Time. But Commonly. Such<sup>235</sup>

Opinions if ill founded do not last long in a Civilized Country people being very attentive to their Interest and not easily deceived in that Respect<sup>236</sup> where their passions do not blind them.

- 16 The Decrease of the price of a Commodity must in like Manner be occasioned by an Increase of the Commodity or a Decrease of the Demand either Real or in<sup>237</sup> opinion
- 17 The Increase or Decrease of the Price of Commodities is not alwise in the Simple proportion of the Causes above mentioned but Commonly as I apprehend in a Greater. Thus Suppose two Countries A & B have a mutual Commerce in Corn & that Neither of them deals with any Other Country in that Commodity A commonly furnishes B with 10,000 Quarters of Wheat<sup>238</sup> & has no more to Spare. In a certain Year B has a demand for ten thousand Quarters<sup>239</sup> as usual but A can onely Spare 7000. I apprehend that in this Case the price would rise more than in the proportion of 7 to 10. However it must be acknowledged that much would depend upon the possibility of easiness of Supplying the Want of Corn by other provisions. On the other hand if A has 15,000 Quarters<sup>240</sup> to spare and has no other Market than with B this would probably sink the price more than in the proportion of 15 to 10. Yet this Depends much on Circumstances. If the Commodity be such as will not keep to another year or if the Sellers are in such Circumstances as that they cannot keep it. It must be sold at any Rate & the price will fall one half or perhaps more But if the Corn will keep to another Year & the Sellers in Opulent Circumstances & furnished with Conveniencies they will keep up the price nearly<sup>241</sup> in proportion to the Natural Value. And this will be the More easy if the Buyers have also ability & convenience [2v] to buy & keep it<sup>242</sup> for one or More<sup>243</sup> Years
18. Hence it is obvious that Commodities that may be long kept do not rise or fall in their prices so much in proportion to<sup>244</sup> the Causes above mentioned as these which cannot be long kept.

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<sup>235</sup>Such] Such [Opinions if Ill founded].

<sup>236</sup>that Respect] that ^ [Respect].

<sup>237</sup>in] in [the General].

<sup>238</sup>10,000 ... Wheat] 10,000 [Balls] [Quarters of Wheat].

<sup>239</sup>thousand Quarters] thousand [Balls] [Quarters].

<sup>240</sup>15,000 Quarters] 15,000 [balls] [Quarters].

<sup>241</sup>price ... proportion] price [nearly] in proportion.

<sup>242</sup>it] it [over Year.].

<sup>243</sup>More] More year.

<sup>244</sup>prices ... to] prices [from] ^ [so ... to].

- 19 It is likewise Evident that the Opulence of the Buyers & Sellers & their Accomodations for Store<sup>245</sup> is a Mean of preventing the fall or Rise of Commodities that may be kept.
- 20 Vice Versa. A great Rise or fall of such Commodities as are Mentioned in the last article above or below their Natural Value is an Indication of Poverty or Bad Management in the Dealers that suffer by it.
- 21 There may be other Remote Causes besides these Mentioned Art 15 & 16 of the Rise & fall of Commodities but they seem onely to operate in proportion as they affect the plenty of the Commodity or the Demand for it. The Death of a Prince may raise the price of Black Cloath but it does this onely by increasing the Demand for it. Riches and Luxury increase the price of Commodities the same way.
- 22 To the Causes Mentioned in Art 15 & 16, We may add this as a third Immediate Cause of the Rise of prices viz where their Expence to the Manufacturer or Merchant is visibly & at once increased as by a Tax by the Rising of Insurance for Import And in this Case the Rise of the price is often Greater than the increase of the Sellers Expence. Thus the Tax on Glass raised the price of that Commodity more than the Amount of the Tax. In these Cases the<sup>246</sup> buyer expects that the Commodity will be raised as much as answers the tax. And the Sellers have<sup>247</sup> an opportunity of representing the tax as more heavy upon them then it really is. And as the Merchant<sup>248</sup> forsees there will be less demand<sup>249</sup> when the price is raised they are before hand in providing<sup>250</sup> less plenty of the Commodity.
- 23 When Commodities by any of the Causes Mentioned are raised above or brought<sup>251</sup> below their Natural Value they have still a tendency to return to it in the Natural Course of things.
- 24<sup>252</sup> As the price of most<sup>253</sup> Commodities is still rising and falling it is necessary where there is a Considerable Commerce to have some Commodity that may Serve for a Common Measure of the Value of others. This Common Measure must be something that <is> easily kept easily Conveyed not

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<sup>245</sup>Sellers ... Store] Sellers ^ [& ... Store].

<sup>246</sup>the] the [Merchan].

<sup>247</sup>have] have of.

<sup>248</sup>Merchant] Merchant [or Manufacturer].

<sup>249</sup>demand] demand [they].

<sup>250</sup>in providing] in [one word illegible] [providing].

<sup>251</sup>Mentioned ... brought] Mentioned [rise] [are raised] above or [fall] [brought].

<sup>252</sup>24] 24 [Since].

<sup>253</sup>of most] of [most].

perishable<sup>254</sup> and is not liable to sudden Risings and fallings in its own value. Gold and Silver by most civilized Nations have been Made the [3r] common Measure of the price of Commodities and are very fit for that Use. And to prevent the Necessity of alwise proofing and weighing those metals when we take them in Exchange for Commodities it has been found Convenient to Coin them into pieces of different weight which have a Certain Figure & Stamp to ascertain<sup>255</sup> their value

- 25 Those that do not labour themselves must be supported by the Labour of Others. Those whose fortunes & Stations exempt them from bodily Labour their Servants & Attendants<sup>256</sup> Lawiers Physicians Divines Soldiers<sup>257</sup> School Men Excise & customhouse Officers &c Sailors.<sup>258</sup> there are others whose labour does not produce Riches but transferrs them from one hand to another or fits them for Consumption Merchants. Cooks Apothecaries Taylors. Others direct the Labourers Stewarts overseers bookkeepers &c<sup>259</sup> Besides many that are at times unable to labour through infancy old age Sickness bearing & Nursing Children.<sup>260</sup> If we consider that all these are maintained by the Labour of Others & most of them consume several Times as much as most Labouring men<sup>261</sup> we shall see that the Labour. of less than one half of Men provides the Riches of the Whole
26. Hence the Riches of a Country are owing to the following Causes 1 When a great proportion of the Inhabitants are Industrious & frugal & few Idle or profuse 2 When the Labour is employed in a great measure upon things that are more permanent or not for immediate Consumption or if they are so are sent Abroad & not consumed at home. Or wher it supplys the place of forreign Importations. 3 The Invention of Usefull Machines or Methods by which the same work may be done by fewer hands or in Shorter Time.
27. Yet a Dealer in Manufactures who employs many hands does cæteris paribus enrich the Country more than one who employs few because besides the profits of the dealer we are to take in the profits of the people that Labour for him

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<sup>254</sup>Conveyed not perishable] Conveyed  $\wedge$  [not perishable].

<sup>255</sup>to ascertain] to [denote] [ascertain].

<sup>256</sup>Labour ... Attendants] Labour  $\wedge$  [their ... Attendants].

<sup>257</sup>Divines Soldiers] Divines [Soldiers].

<sup>258</sup>Excise ... Sailors. *Interlinear material.*

<sup>259</sup>Taylors ... &c.] Taylors [Others ... &c].

<sup>260</sup>through ... Children.] through [infancy] ... [bearing ... Children].

<sup>261</sup>men] men [do].



- 28 Nay a Manufacture that hurts the Dealer may yet profit the Nation. tho this cannot often happen & rather by Accident than from the Natural Course of things.

## 5. OF COMMERCE

### *a. Of Domestic Commerce*

#### Of Domestic Commerce

- 29 A Nation may be Rich & flourishing by the Industry of its inhabitants without any forreign trade
- 30 Without Forreign Trade a Nation can have no silver and Gold but from Mines in the Country.
- 31 It signifies little to a Nation whether silver and Gold be in plenty or Scarce without forreign Commerce<sup>262</sup>

### *b. Of Foreign Commerce*

#### Of Forreign Commerce

- 33 The difference betwixt the Import & Export of a Nation is what it gains by forreign Commerce & is called the Ballance of Trade.

### *c. Of Commerce with Our Colonies*

#### Of Commerce with our Collonies

##### The History of Commerce

The Other Effects of it with regard to the Manners of a people Their Morals. Peace & War, the Arts & Sciences Liberty See Montesquieu Hume Preceptor. Petty Davenunt Characteristics of the present political State of Gr Brittain Wallace The Querist 5<sup>th</sup> Edition 1750 Bishop of Cloyne Essay on the Advantages and disadvantages which respectively attend France & Gr. Britain with regard to Trade & by M<sup>r</sup> Tucker of Bristol Sir Mathew Decker Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of forreign Trade & the Remedies thereof Of the National Debt the consequences of it & the Schemes for paying it Hooke

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<sup>262</sup>Commerce] Commerce [32 The Spirit of Commerce in a Nation is favourable to some Virtues and unfavourable to others.].

## 6. OF MONEY

*a. Gold and Silver As a Measure of the Price of Commodities*

[4r] Gold and Silver a proper Measure of the Price of Commodities 1 Because they do not rise and fall much in value being durable and always esteemed 2 Because divisible into small parts 3 Because the Quantity and Finness<sup>263</sup> on which the value depends may be exactly ascertained. 4 Because easily conveyed 5 Because they keep without Waste Facilitates Exchange<sup>264</sup> The price of things Measured by Oxen or sheep in homers time Gold and Silver at first Weighed. Inconveniences of this. Afterwards coined by States. Coin authorised by Law as a lawfull tender of Payment.<sup>265</sup>

The Practices of Princes upon Coin. The practices of false coiners Clippers washers Sweaters. &c

State of the Coin in King Williams Time Lockes Treatises

Laws of the Mint. Penal Laws against melting the Coin against Coining against Exporting.

*b. Of False Maxims with Regard to Money*False Notions concerning<sup>266</sup> Money

- 1 That it receives its value from Edicts of Princes or States Silver & Gold must have Value<sup>267</sup> that depends not on the Will of Princes and States 1 Because it cannot be found out dug from the Mines and Refined without much Labour and Expence. 2 Because it has allways been in demand as a commodity and is usefull for Vessels for ornaments for Utensils 3 it has therefore a Natural Price as other Commodities have. Gold and Silver must have a Natural Price compared with one another & with other Metals and other Commodities
- 2 It cannot have an unnatural Price fixed upon it by Princes and States without Injury to the Subjects and injury to trad(e) 1 If the Price fixed upon it is too low it can Neither be dug if it is in the Country *(one word illegible)* will be

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<sup>263</sup>Finness] Finness [may be].

<sup>264</sup>Facilitates Exchange. *Interlinear material. Horizontal line drawn in left-hand margin under this line.*

<sup>265</sup>Payment.] Payment. [Hence the Notion of its Receiving its Value from Statute.].

<sup>266</sup>concerning] concerning [Coin].

<sup>267</sup>[Silver] must have [a] Value] [Silver]  $\wedge$  [Silver & Gold] must have [a] Value.

- exported<sup>268</sup> nor imported by trade. 2 If too high<sup>269</sup> laboring people will leave the Country.<sup>270</sup>
- 3 It cannot be raised or lowered without bringing distress to the Country. It will be counterfitted.<sup>271</sup> Raising the Denomination enriches the Monied Man, at the Expence of others. Lowering the Denomination has the contrary Effect. [4v] It is not altering the Denomination that can produce any Effect on Commerce good or bad. But it is making the same quantity of Silver to be an equivalent to a greater or a less quantity of other goods<sup>272</sup>
- [4r] 2 That<sup>273</sup> it is good policy to forbid the exportation of it.
- 3 That the Riches of a Nation consists in<sup>274</sup> the Quantity of Money yet it must consist chiefly in the Quantity of Commodities which are not perishable
- 4 That the price of other things must rise in a state in proportion to the plenty of Money.
- 5 That base Money is more profitable to a Nation than that which is fine The Nation ought to have onely one Standart viz Silver Of the proportion between Gold and Silver

The difficulty of knowing the Ballance of Forreign Trade Ways in which the wealth of a Nation may be increased independent of the Ballance of forreign Trade 1 Money spent by forreigners. 2 Natives who live Abroad 3. Subsidies 4 Naturalizing rich forreigners Emigrations of such 5 The alteration of the Coin by wearing or by any other Means Why Bullion is dearer than Coin? Does not the loss of this fall upon the Bank?

- 6 That trade is hurtfull with a Nation which takes not of our Commodities an equal Value to what we take of theirs This Maxim False.

[4v] 7 That Banks & Paper Credit is hurtfull to the Nation<sup>275</sup>

### *c. Gold and Silver As Commodities of Intrinsic Value*

[4/III/16, 1r]

Tho' Silver and Gold be the common Measure of the price of Commodities, yet it may be said that those Metals have not allways the same Value Their Value different in

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<sup>268</sup>Country ... exported] Country [*one word illegible* ... exported].

<sup>269</sup>high] high [it will be exported.].

<sup>270</sup>leave ... Country. *Interlinear material*.

<sup>271</sup>It ... counterfitted. *Interlinear material*.

<sup>272</sup>Silver ... goods. *Material marked A whose placement is indicated by Reid's instruction see A below in left-hand margin adjacent to States.*

<sup>273</sup>That] That [a Nation may be impoverished].

<sup>274</sup>Nation consists in] Nation [bears proportion to] [consists in].

<sup>275</sup>Nation] Nation [8 That.].

different Ages. How it is to be estimated. The lowest value the Maintenance of those who dig & refine it. This varies according to the depth and fertility of Mines & the Improvements in the Art of refining.

Effects of Manufactures. 1 Trades & professions they produce. 1 Labourers in the various parts of the Manufacture who work either by days wages or by the piece The great advantage of this to the poor. It multiplies labouring hands, employs those usefully who would otherwise be idle. 2 The Merchant. Subordinate to him are porters Waggoners. Ships & Sailors. Carpenters Rope. Sail 3 The Retailer.

### Of Banks

Bank Credit an Obligation upon the Bank to pay to the person that has it so much Money on demand, Great Commerce requires much Money to carry it on<sup>276</sup>

The Armour of Diomed (says Homer cost 9 Oxen, that of Glaucus 100 Salt the Instrument of Commerce in Abyssinia A Species of Shells in some parts of India Dried Cod in Newfoundland Tobacco in Virginia Sugar in some of the West Indies Iron among the ancient Spaniards. Copper among the Rom Servius Tullius first coined Copper Money the As or pondo was a pound of Copper. In the later times of the Republick it was onely half an ounce that is the 24<sup>th</sup> part of a pound,

The Romans began to coin Silver five years before the first punick War, but the always reckoned Money either by Asses 2 which was a copper Coin or by Sestevly which was 2 1/2 Asses

[1v] The Northern Nations who established themselves upon the Ruins of the Roman Empire seem to have used Silver money first & to have always reckoned by it. There was little Gold coined in<sup>277</sup> England till the time of Edward 3 & no Copper till Ja 1 of England

### 7. SUMMARY OF SECTIONS 4-6

[4/III/10, 1r]  
May 13 1765

We have divided the ends of Political Society into primary and Secondary or principal and Subordinate. The primary and Principal Ends are Defence against<sup>278</sup> forreign Enemies and internal peace & Justice among the Citizens. These are Secured by a proper form Of Political Government of which we have discoursed.<sup>279</sup> The secondary

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<sup>276</sup>Great ... on. *Reid has drawn a line under this line.*

<sup>277</sup>in] in [Brit].

<sup>278</sup>are Defence against] are [Security from] [Defence against].

<sup>279</sup>have discoursed.] have [discoursed].

and Subordinate Ends of Political Society are whatever may render the Society more happy and flourishing. The chief things of this kind and of which I proposed to discourse Are the following 1 Population. 2 Virtue 3 Learning and Knowledge 4 Riches & Opulence 5 Publick Revenue, 6 Arms. We have dispatched what we intended to say of the three first and began to Discourse of the 4 which is indeed so copious a Subject and has been so little handled in a Systematical way that it is difficult to reduce it into method. In order to<sup>280</sup> prevent Embarrassment we have endeavoured to give a Distinct Notion<sup>281</sup> of what is understood by Riches. All alienable property which contributes to the convenience and accommodation of Life either Really or in the general opinion comes under the Denomination of Riches. We have endeavoured to shew that almost every thing we can call Riches is produced by human Labour and industry. We have considered how the productions of human Labour come to be rated and what are the causes why things which require equal Labour in the production of them have notwithstanding very<sup>282</sup> unequal Values or prices put upon them, And what it is that we may call the Natural Price of Commodities. We have endeavoured to shew the causes which raise the Market Price of Commodities above or sink it below their natural Value. We have considered the Use of Money as a common Measure of the Price of Commodities as a mean of facilitating the exchange of them and as a Commodity of intrinsic value. We have mentioned the advantages and disadvantages<sup>283</sup> of coining and Stamping<sup>284</sup> gold and Silver by which it is converted into what we call money and have given some Account of the practices of Princes and their Ministers in debasing the Coin & thereby defrauding their Subjects and Creditors. And last of all we endeavoured to refute several false Notions which have been entertained upon the Subject of Money Such as That it receives its value from Laws or Edicts of princes. That it may be kept in a Country by laws prohibiting the Exportation of it. That the Riches of a Nation Consist in the Quantity of Money that Circulates in it. That the price of Commodities will be doubled if the Quantity of Money in a Nation is doubled & raised or diminished in proportion to the Quantity of Money. L'Esprit des Loix Lv 22 ch 8<sup>285</sup> Lastly that the Money may be kept in a State by making it of a base Alloy. We proposed in the next place to consider the Nature of Credit. Which will lead us to the Consideration of Interest and of Banks and what is called Paper Money.

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<sup>280</sup><sub>to</sub>] to [this I h].

<sup>281</sup>Distinct Notion] Distinct [Idea].

<sup>282</sup><sub>very</sub>] very very.

<sup>283</sup>advantages and disadvantages] advantages  $\wedge$  [and disadvantages].

<sup>284</sup>Stamping] Stamping [Money].

<sup>285</sup>L'Esprit ... 8. *Written in left-hand margin.*



## 8. THE NATURE OF CREDIT

*a. Common Credit*

In order to Reason distinctly about Credit, the various kinds of it and their Effects. It is necessary to take a general View of what we call Traffick [1v] which we distinguished into Natural and artificial. Natural Traffick is where a man buys things that he may use them but Artificial Traffick is when a man buys things not for his own Use but that he may sell them again at an advanced price and make profit upon them. There can be no society wherein every man supplies all his own necessities without any exchange of commodities with others. In natural Traffick there will be Credit All bargains must be either for ready payment or upon Credit.

The most convenient time for buying will not always be the most convenient time for paying It is accidental if these two points of Time Coincide.

The Steps by which Artificial Traffick or the Profession of Merchants is introduced into Society.<sup>286</sup> 1 Labour assorted into particular Trades and Arts which are made distinct Professions. As Shoemakers Weavers Taylors Blacksmiths farmers and the like The Advantage of this to Society 2 Markets or Fairs for the Sale of those several Commodities. 3 Merchants who buy at one Market and carry to another 4 Manufacturers<sup>287</sup> who hire artificers to work for them. The last state most favourable to Commerce it multiplies professions, makes men more dexterous and Skillfull in their several Professions more laborious and produces better commodities. Gives rise to the Invention of Machines, & the multiplication of them by which more work is done with the same Quantity of Labour

The Effects of Traffick in making Money fruitfull and employing the whole Money in circulation. When this happens People fall upon ways to enlarge the circulation by credit. Paper Credit. what

Of Interest of Money.<sup>288</sup>*b. Paper Credit*

2 Different meanings of the Word Credit. It sometimes signifies money due to a man. and is opposed to Debt which signifies money or value due by him.  
May 14<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup>Society.] Society. [Fairs or markets].

<sup>287</sup>4 Manufacturers] 4 [Merchants] [Manufacturers].

<sup>288</sup>Of ...Money. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is conjectural and for which there is no corresponding discussion.*

<sup>289</sup>May 14. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is conjectural.*

But at other times it signifies the Esteem which Men have of a mans Riches and Integrity in his dealing which makes it safe to trust him with money. How Paper Credit differs from Common Credit? In this onely that it is easily transferred from one man to another without loss of tim<sup>e</sup> or Expen<sup>ce</sup>.

Wherein Paper Credit agrees with money or differs from it 1 It answers the same purpose with money as a measure of the Value of Commodities 2 As a mean of facilitating the Exchange of Commodities In both these respects it not onely answers the purpose of Money but in some degree is preferable to Gold and Silver. For first it is more easily conveyed. 2 It is not liable to clipping or wearing 3 it is sooner Sold and 4 If it is lost there is no loss to the Nation.

We are next to consider wherein Paper Credit differs from money and the Essential Difference lies in this that it has no intrinsick value its value depends entirely upon things extrinsick to it. Let a man be ever so carefull of his bank notes yet if the bank fails and becomes insolvent his Notes are onely waste paper. If the bank is suspected no body will take its notes as payment. And<sup>290</sup> in general the Circulation of those bank Notes must be limeted to places where the bank is known and believed to<sup>291</sup> stand upon a Solid foundation. It is not so with Money. The value of Gold and Silver coin depends not upon any [2r] thing extrinsick to it. If I am possessed of 100 £ St in Gold or Silver<sup>292</sup> whatever bank breaks or Stops my money loses none of its value. The value of it does not even depend upon its stamp and form for if it is melted down into a Mass it is still of the same value It is current in all civilized nations and loses nothing of its value by being carried beyond Seas.

2 We may observe that whatever the quantity of Paper Credit<sup>293</sup> is which is in a Nation. That Nation is no richer upon that Account In this also it resembles Common Credit which always supposes as much debt and the one ballances the other.

## 9. FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

May 15 1765

Whether Banks are a benefit to a trading nation or destructive

Of Luxury. How far it tends to Opulence

Of Forreign Trade the Ballance of Trade & Exchange

The Things that tend to enrich a Nation Industry, Frugality The Cultivation of the Ground, & encouragement of Those that are employed in it. Invention of Machines

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<sup>290</sup>And] And [wherever th].

<sup>291</sup>to] to [be upo].

<sup>292</sup>St ... Silver] St ^ [in ... Silver].

<sup>293</sup>Paper Credit] Paper [money] [Credit].

Taste and Skill in productions that go to forreign Markets. Low price of Labour and increase of Labouring hands.

May 16 1765<sup>294</sup>

Effects of Trade carried to the highest pitch. It increases cities corrupts the Morals of a Nation. Makes every thing venal. Creates a moneyd Interest distinct from the Landed & trading Interest.

Arms Naval Strong Places<sup>295</sup> Land Forces. Hired Standing Armies Militia  
May 17 1765<sup>296</sup>

Revenue Crown Lands Customs Excise Land Tax, Taxes on the necessarys of Life  
Tax on Luxury Poll Tax or Census.<sup>297</sup> National Debt. Lotteries  
[4/III/11, 2v]

Of the Manner of Raising the public Money by Excises & Customs. whether<sup>298</sup> This is more suitable to a free Government than Poll Taxes or a Census. It increases the power of the Crown is more heavy upon the Subject. Yet perhaps a Census would be looked upon as more oppressive. Of Farming the Revenue.

Of Morgaging the Revenue & of the Public Debt. This enlarges the Power of the Crown. Creates a Moneyd Interest. Where the Money is due to forreigners diminishes the Riches of the Nation increases the Number of Taxes. Whether the Multiplying Taxes does not increase Industry & how far see Hume. It makes the burthen of War less Sensible.

Of the National Debt of Brittain.

Of Banks and Paper Credit & its Consequences

Of National Riches Agriculture<sup>299</sup> Trade The Price of Commodities. the Ballance of Trade Exchange. &c

Whether all Governments must have a period as Men have.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>294</sup>May ... 1765. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>295</sup>Naval Strong Places] Naval  $\wedge$  [Strong Places].

<sup>296</sup>May ... 1765. *Material written in left-hand margin whose placement is conjectural.*

<sup>297</sup>Excise ... Census.] Excise [Land ... Life] ... [or Census].

<sup>298</sup>Customs. whether] Customs. [whether].

<sup>299</sup>Riches Agriculture] Riches  $\wedge$  [Agriculture].

<sup>300</sup>Of the Manner ... have. *Material whose placement here is indicated by internal evidence.*

## Appendix 5

OFFPRINT

STUDIES ON VOLTAIRE  
AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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KURTIS G. KITAGAWA

‘Cadgers are ay speaking of Crooksadles’:  
the rediscovered letters of Thomas Reid  
to Drs Andrew and David Skene



THE VOLTAIRE FOUNDATION

1993



KURTIS G. KITAGAWA

‘Cadgers are ay speaking of Crooksadles’:  
the rediscovered letters of Thomas Reid  
to Drs Andrew and David Skene<sup>1</sup>

For Anne

In the summer of 1991, while going through the papers of Alexander Thomson of Banchory (1798–1868)<sup>2</sup> at New College Library, University of Edinburgh, I discovered a volume (THO 2)<sup>3</sup> labelled on the spine ‘MSS. Letters’ which

1. Written while the author held an Edinburgh University Post-graduate Studentship. In the course of preparing this article, I have incurred a good many scholarly debts and would like to acknowledge in particular the assistance of the following: Dr R. G. W. Anderson, Director, British Museum (formerly Director, National Museums of Scotland); Dr Mike Barfoot, Senior Assistant Librarian, Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library; Mr Iain Beavan, Sub-librarian, Special Collections and Archives, Aberdeen University Library; Dr Richard Bellamy, Lecturer in Politics, University of Edinburgh; Dr John Cairns, Senior Lecturer in Scots Law, University of Edinburgh; Mrs Marace Dareau, Senior Editor, Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue, Edinburgh; Ms Gina Douglas, Librarian, Linnean Society of London; Professor Roger L. Emerson, Department of History, University of Western Ontario; Miss Joan Ferguson, Librarian, Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh; Mr Brian Jackson, Curator of Minerals and Gemstones, Royal Museum of Scotland; Miss Alison Morrison-Low, Curator of Scientific Instruments, Royal Museum of Scotland; Dr Nicholas Phillipson, Reader in History, University of Edinburgh; Mr Graham Reid, Secretary and Treasurer, Glasgow Society of Sons of the Clergy; Dr Murray Simpson, Librarian, New College Library, University of Edinburgh; Mr David Weston, Principal Assistant Librarian, Special Collections, Glasgow University Library; Dr Paul Wood, Department of History, University of Victoria; Mrs Jennifer Woods, Senior Scientific Officer, Retired, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. I would also like to thank my wife, Anne Todkill, for her invaluable editorial assistance. This paper is dedicated to her.

2. Scholar, traveller, diarist, church elder, improver and philanthropist, Banchory was a man of many interests and the leisure to pursue them, preferring his ‘calling’ as a country gentleman to the legal profession to which he was trained. His estate was not far from Aberdeen (see George Smeaton, *Memoir of Alexander Thomson of Banchory*, Edinburgh 1869).

3. Recently renumbered; formerly THO 37. This volume, which is approximately 33.7 cm long, 21 cm wide, and 1.7 cm deep, is bound in marbled boards with half-calf binding. The bookplate of Alexander Thomson of Banchory is affixed to the front end-paper, which also contains, in Thomson’s hand, the owner’s address and a note about one of the Reid letters (i.e. that of 23 March 1766) being ‘Loose’. The following page contains a note, also in Thomson’s hand, indicating that the thirteen Reid letters are printed in Sir William Hamilton’s ‘memoir of Reid prefixed to his collected writings 1846’. The back of this page is blank, as are the recto and verso sides of the next folio. There are also two blank folios before the back end-paper, which contains an obituary notice of a certain Charlotte Knox who was related to the Scottish reformer John Knox and therefore to Thomson, who was directly descended from Knox. The volume is of mixed construction, the materials up to and including a letter from John Walker to Dr David Skene being sewn into the binding and the remainder of the items being mounted on guards.

includes among various other, mostly eighteenth-century, items<sup>4</sup> thirteen holograph letters from the Scottish common-sense philosopher Thomas Reid (1710-1796) to his Aberdonian friends, the physician Andrew Skene (?1702-1767) and Skene's son David (1731-1770), also a physician.<sup>5</sup> The letters date from the period 1764-1770 and therefore provide a record of Reid's first seven years as professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow College – a chair to which he succeeded after the resignation of Adam Smith. In his indispensable edition of Reid's *Works*, Sir William Hamilton<sup>6</sup> printed the letters but omitted certain passages, amounting to almost 1,800 words, which he evidently considered to be too delicate in nature or of insufficient interest to publish. These deleted passages are here printed for the first time,<sup>7</sup> along with the most material variants<sup>8</sup> between Hamilton's text and the original documents (see Schedule of restored passages and corrections, p.221f.).

The retrieval of these manuscript letters from obscurity provides an occasion to consider afresh their significance both as biographical documents and as windows onto the intellectual and scientific milieu in which Reid circulated in Glasgow. In the previously unpublished material we see Reid more clearly than before as a family man<sup>9</sup> and find confirmed our understanding of him as a man of science with a love of precision in all of his observations, however humble. The letters also reveal that the philosopher had a wry sense of humour conspicuously absent in his public writings, a good example of which is contained in a passage relating to Sir William Hamilton's grandfather, the professor of anatomy and botany at Glasgow, Dr Thomas Hamilton (1728-

4. MSS not described in the following are listed in the Appendix.

5. The Reid letters are f.1-25.

6. Hamilton (1788-1856) was professor of logic and metaphysics at Edinburgh University. His edition of Reid was first published in 1846.

7. With the kind permission of Dr Murray Simpson, Librarian, New College Library, University of Edinburgh.

8. Variations in such particulars as spelling, capitalisation and punctuation are generally not recorded.

9. Confiding details of his family's health problems and of difficulty in the birth of his 'little Bess' (letters XI, 1, VII-XI). The biographical value of the letters has long been recognised, but at the expense of their scientific interest. Hamilton, writing in 1846, suggests that these letters 'shew us the philosopher in all the unaffected simplicity of his character, and as he appeared to his friends in the familiar intercourse of ordinary life' (prefatory note to 'Correspondence of Dr Reid', *The Works of Thomas Reid*, ed. William Hamilton (Edinburgh 1852 [1846]), 3rd ed. (hereinafter abbreviated to *Works*), p.39; cf. Hamilton to Thomson, 28 April [1837], NCL MS THO 2, f.73v). (The first five editions are identical, aside from prefatory material, up to p.914, having been stereotyped. Material added to or salvaged from Hamilton's notes by H. L. Mansel in the sixth (1863) and subsequent editions does not affect the pagination of the earlier material.) A. Campbell Fraser, writing in 1898, says that 'Reid's homely letters [...] give some interesting pictures of the details of the family's life, in the years which immediately followed the settlement in Glasgow' (*Thomas Reid*, Famous Scots Series, Edinburgh, London [1898], p.79).

1781), which is now restored to letter VII. The present discussion attempts to situate the letters as a whole within Reid's personal and professional biography and argues that a full annotation of their contents will yield much for our understanding of Reid's character, preoccupations and habit of mind. As considerations of space have made it impossible to reprint the letters here in their entirety the present article must be used in conjunction with Hamilton's abridged version.<sup>10</sup> In sketching out some of the background for the letters I have drawn from a great many contemporary manuscript and printed sources which have thus far not been exploited by Reid scholars.

### The provenance of the letters

How or when the Reid letters passed into Thomson of Banchory's possession is obscure, although his claim to them presumably lay in the fact that David Skene was his great-uncle.<sup>11</sup> We do know that Banchory loaned the letters to Hamilton when the latter was preparing his edition of Reid's *Works* for the press in 1837. More than a quarter of a century later, Banchory sent them to James McCosh (1811-1894), professor of logic and metaphysics at Queen's College, Belfast,<sup>12</sup> who was at that time engaged in researching and writing the articles on Hume and Reid<sup>13</sup> for his encyclopaedic *Scottish philosophy*.<sup>14</sup>

10. A fully glossed edition of the full text of the letters is currently in preparation by the present author.

11. This familial relationship is stated in Banchory to Hamilton, 16 May 1837, NCL MS THO 2, f.69v.

12. Later President of Princeton College, New Jersey.

13. McCosh to Thomson, 19 October 1863, f.2r.

14. London 1875. McCosh did, however, make considerably better use of those Reid papers (and materials relating to Reid) which he borrowed through the Aberdeen lawyer Francis Edmond (1805-1892), liberally printing extracts and summaries of these hitherto unpublished documents in his *Scottish philosophy*, p.199-200, 207, 223-24, 473-76 ('List of letters and papers', AUL MS 2814/1/80, f.1r). It should be noted that the Thomson papers contain a fascinating record of certain details connected with the publication of Hamilton's *Works of Thomas Reid* and McCosh's *Scottish philosophy*, four letters each from Hamilton and McCosh to Thomson and one letter from Thomson to Hamilton being scattered among uncatalogued correspondence in boxes and bound volumes, including THO 2 itself. Details of this correspondence are as follows: in THO 2, Thomson to Hamilton, dated Banchory House, 16 May 1837, f.69r-70v, with enclosures, i.e. an undated set of 'Notes' about Reid by the professor of natural philosophy at Marischal College and University, William Knight (1786-1844), f.71r-72v, and Hamilton to Thomson, dated Edinburgh, 28 April [1837], f.73r-74v; in THO 16, a Hamilton letter, dated Edinburgh, 14 May 1837, which provides the context of the Thomson letter. Among the uncatalogued correspondence is a third Hamilton letter (Alexander Thomson of Banchory papers, letters, 1837), consisting of two folios, dated Edinburgh, 16 January 1837, part of which was published by Smeaton in his *Memoir* (p.153-54); a fourth Hamilton letter (Banchory papers, letters, 1845) makes reference to 'a Note upon Reid' in his forthcoming edition of Reid's *Works*, dated 16 Great King Street, 24 November 1845. (This letter is signed by Hamilton but is not in Hamilton's hand.) Further details of the events leading up to the publication of Hamilton's

After Thomson's death in 1868, 'many scores of volumes' from the Banchory papers were obtained by the professor of exegetical theology at New College, George Smeaton (1814-1889), who published his *Memoir of Alexander Thomson of Banchory* in the following year.<sup>15</sup> That Smeaton simply failed to notice the Reid letters among the daunting quantity of material at his disposal is a matter of conjecture, but at any rate the letters have lain in obscurity at New College for well over a century. By what accident or design volume THO 2 did not go with the rest of Banchory's bequest of certain of his own and the bulk of David Skene's papers to Aberdeen University Library is not known, but this circumstance has no doubt done nothing to draw the attention of the growing number of Reid sleuths to the Banchory papers housed at New College.

### The finest prospect in Glasgow

To gloss all of the personal and topical references contained in Reid's letters to the Skenes is to reconstruct his circle at Glasgow College as a closely knit scientific and technical community. Assuming Andrew Skene's own familiarity with the place, Reid in letter I passes quickly over the amenities of the College – 'the fine houses of the Masters, [...] the Astronomical Observatory, [...] Robin Fowlis Collection of Pictures & painting College, [...] y<sup>e</sup> Foundry for Types & printing house' – with which he seems well pleased. But here already is a glimpse of Glasgow College as a beehive of enlightened activity. The Macfarlane Observatory had recently been built on college grounds,<sup>16</sup> and the professor of practical astronomy, Alexander Wilson (1714-1786), ran a type foundry in one of the College gardens and designed types, notably those for the Foulis edition of Homer and for that common property of coffee-house culture, *The Spectator*.<sup>17</sup> This is the same Dr Wilson whose invention (c.1758), the elliptical-bore thermometer, Reid recommends to David Skene in letter III, sends to him in letter VII, and sends once more, following repairs, in letter IX.<sup>18</sup> In

edition of Reid's *Works* may be found in John Veitch's *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton* (Edinburgh, London 1869), p.207-208, 293-94. Also among the uncatalogued correspondence are the four McCosh letters, consisting of two folios each (Banchory papers, letters, 1863), concerning the 'Manuscript Book' and, more specifically, the 'Mss of Reid' with which we are concerned here. Letter 1: Brechin, 3 July 1863. Letter 2: Brechin, 8 August 1863. Letter 3: Queen's College, Belfast, 19 October 1863. Letter 4: Queen's College, Belfast, 26 October 1863.

15. p.[v].

16. The foundation stone was laid in 1757.

17. *The Glasgow journal*, 21/28 September 1769; Patrick Wilson, 'Biographical account of Alexander Wilson', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 10, pt 2 (1824), p.283-84.

18. Wilson supplied Joseph Black's students at Edinburgh in the winter of 1768 with 'Small pocket Thermometers' and 'boiling water ones' both 'made only of the choicest pieces of tubes' for one guinea and one and a half guineas respectively (Wilson to Black, 21 January 1768, EUL MS Gen. 873/1, f.26r).

Alexander Wilson and his son Patrick, Reid would enjoy a 'similarity of [...] scientific pursuits, and an entire sympathy [...] of] views and sentiments'.<sup>19</sup>

Robert Foulis (1707-1776), who with his brother Andrew (1712-1775) was printer to the university, had established his Academy of the Fine Arts earlier in the period. Reid and the elder Foulis were friends, and Reid was consulted on publishing matters. While the actual printing-press was no longer located within the College, the Foulis firm had its bookshop and bindery there and the two brothers apparently lived in college rooms.<sup>20</sup> The mathematician and professor of Greek, James Moor, to whose insobriety Reid alludes in letter 1, had revised the Greek texts of the Foulis Homer and collaborated on a translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, also for the Foulis press, a copy of which Reid is believed to have owned.<sup>21</sup> Following Robert Foulis' death, Reid offered to help Foulis' son-in-law and foreman, Robert Dewar (c.1755-c.1781), set up a printing business of his own.

Glasgow College was home to a literary society which met on Fridays and whose membership included David Hume, Adam Smith and the professor of civil law John Millar (1735-1801). Reid himself was made a member shortly after his arrival in Glasgow and remained an active participant in the Society almost to the end of his life, giving his first discourse on 15 March 1765 and delivering his last on 27 November 1795.<sup>22</sup> Another of Reid's colleagues in the club was the eminent chemist, Joseph Black (1728-1799), in whom he 'met a simplicity of manners congenial to his own'<sup>23</sup> and whose classes he attended in 1765 (letter III).

Also active at this time was James Watt (1736-1819), who had recently set up shop within college bounds as mathematical instrument maker to the University, and whom Reid would report to be making improvements to the steam engine (letter III), concocting a silver solution with which cambric could be permanently stamped (letter XII), and inventing a perspective machine which seems to have captured Reid's imagination (passage now restored to letter III).

One other figure attached to the College who is alluded to in Reid's letters is Black's pupil John Robison (1739-1805), appointed lecturer in chemistry at

19. Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the life and writings of Thomas Reid', in *Works*, p.10a.

20. Glasgow Bibliographical Society, *Catalogue of the Foulis Exhibition* (Glasgow 1913), p.[23]; James MacLehose, *The Glasgow University Press 1638-1931* (Glasgow 1931), p.127-28, 150 n.2, 157, 163, 164, 193; David Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis and the Glasgow Press* (Glasgow 1913), p.7, 99, 106, [115].

21. The 3rd ed. This volume is thought to be housed at the Bodleian Library, although I have been unable to locate it.

22. See GUL MS General 4; Royal Faculty of Procurators MS 378.8.

23. Stewart, 'Life of Reid', in *Works*, p.10a.



Glasgow in 1766 (letter VII) and professor of natural philosophy at Edinburgh in 1774. The influence of Reid's philosophy may be detected in Robison's *Proofs of a conspiracy* (1797). Acknowledging his assistance with an optical experiment, Robison would describe Reid as 'a most respectable and intelligent friend' and 'a mathematician and naturalist of the first rank'.<sup>24</sup>

Reid was elected to the moral philosophy chair at Glasgow on 22 May 1764. He was by no means a shoe-in for the job; eighteen days were allowed for the choice of a successor to Smith.<sup>25</sup> Reid's appointment was opposed by Black and Millar but supported, both at Court and in the College, by James Ogilvy, Lord Deskford (later 6th Earl of Findlater and 3rd Earl of Seafield; ?1714-1770). Deskford wrote to the professor of medicine and chemistry at Edinburgh, William Cullen (1710-1790),<sup>26</sup> as soon as he got wind of Smith's departure for France (and imminent demission) in January 1764, recommending Reid as 'the fittest Man in the Kingdom for that Profession' and hoping to mobilise Cullen's Glasgow connections. Deskford suggested to Cullen that: 'If you are of the same Opinion, it will be doing a Service to the Publick to let your Friends who have Interest in the University of Glasgow know your Opinion.'<sup>27</sup> Deskford may also have approached his brother-in-law Lord Hopetoun (2nd Earl; 1704-1781) on Reid's behalf. One wonders if it was with some calculation that Reid dedicated his *Inquiry*, published on 8 March,<sup>28</sup> to Deskford,<sup>29</sup> and we might also speculate, given that Reid's acceptance of the chair is dated *Edinburgh* 26 May,<sup>30</sup> that he had been actively trying to consolidate his Court support.<sup>31</sup> If this is in fact the case, it belies Dugald Stewart's portrayal of Reid as a man 'remote from the pursuits of ambition',<sup>32</sup> itself an echo of Reid's demurring representation of himself in the 'Dedication' to his *Inquiry* as one 'disengaged from the pursuits of interest and ambition'.<sup>33</sup> Reid's appointment was also supported by an Aberdeen crony, Robert Traill

24. 'Impulsion', *Encyclopædia britannica*, 3rd edn, *Supplement*, vol. i (Edinburgh 1801), p.804; Richard Olson, *Scottish philosophy and British physics 1750-1880* (Princeton 1975), p.159-60.

25. *Glasgow journal*, 17/24 May 1764; GUA MS 26643, p.28.

26. Formerly professor of medicine at Glasgow.

27. City of Edinburgh District Council Archives, Council Record, vols 81, p.404-407; 82, p.150; Deskford to Cullen, 22 January 1764, GUL MS Cullen 78, f.2r; letter VI.

28. *Glasgow journal*, 1/8 March 1764.

29. Reid admitted later in life that he was not above currying favour by means of such dedications. Reid to James Gregory, 30 July 1789, in *Works*, p.73a-b.

30. Reid to Sir Thomas Miller (Lord Advocate and Rector; 1717-1789), GUA MS 34687, f.1r; cf. Miller to William Leechman, Edinburgh, 29 May 1764, GUA MS 34559, f.1r.

31. Although Deskford says to Cullen: 'M<sup>r</sup> Reid is quite ignorant of my writing, and I suppose has no Thoughts of the Thing' (GUL MS Cullen 78, f.2r).

32. 'Life of Reid', in *Works*, p.[3]a.

33. *Works*, p.96b.

(1720-1775), who was, like Reid, an original member of the Wise Club, and who had been appointed professor of divinity at Glasgow in 1761 with Deskford's help.<sup>34</sup> Lord Kames (1696-1782), with whom Reid had corresponded on philosophical subjects since at least 1762,<sup>35</sup> was another who supported the philosopher's appointment at Court. Lord Queensberry (3rd Duke and 2nd Duke of Dover; 1698-1778) may also have added his voice at Court to those of Deskford, Hopetoun and Kames. Gaining the Court interest was especially important when the college recommendation was divided, since the presentation of the chair lay with the Crown.

Dr William Wight (d.1782),<sup>36</sup> who had been appointed professor of church history at Glasgow in 1762, and the professor of humanity George Muirhead (d.1773) had also been considered within the college as successors to Smith. Hume's friend Baron Mure (1718-1776)<sup>37</sup> probably favoured Wight.<sup>38</sup> Black and Millar would have preferred Thomas Young, who had carried on Smith's classes in the latter's absence. The eligibility of a certain Mr Baillie<sup>39</sup> was being urged by the Lord Privy Seal, James Stuart Mackenzie (?1719-1800), who seemed anxious to carry on in the footsteps of his late uncle, the 3rd Duke of Argyll, in exerting influence in college appointments.<sup>40</sup> Black and Millar, however, feared that Mackenzie would be swayed by Kames's and Deskford's support of Reid; Black wrote to Smith praising Young's performance, and Millar urged Smith to prevail upon Mackenzie to block Reid's candidacy.<sup>41</sup> Smith was evidently not uninterested in the prospects for his successor; it seems that Henry Herbert (1741-1811)<sup>42</sup> was sizing up the abilities of Reid and of the principal of Marischal College, George Campbell (1719-1796), in Aberdeen for him the previous summer (i.e. about the time when he was

34. Traill was distantly related to Deskford. Deskford had also been instrumental in getting another of his kinsmen, namely William Ogilvie (1736-1819), appointed Reid's successor as regent and professor of philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen, in 1764 (D. C. MacDonald, biographical notes to Ogilvie, *Birthright in land*, London 1891, p.157, 159, 160).

35. E.g. Reid to Kames, 29 December 1762, in Ian Ross (ed.), 'Unpublished letters of Thomas Reid to Lord Kames, 1762-1782', *Texas studies in literature and language* 7 (1965-1966) (New York, London 1971), in which Reid mentions his 'Enquiry into the five Senses' (p.24).

36. Hugh Blair to [Hume], 6 April 1764, NLS MS 23153 (Hume Correspondence), no.52, f.1v.

37. Himself elected Rector of Glasgow University in 1764 (GUA MS 26643, p.32; letter 1).

38. Cf. Hume to Mure, 27 October 1775, NLS MS 21352 (Hume Correspondence), no.15, f.1.

39. Undoubtedly Dr James Baillie (d.1778), who would fail in this contest but be appointed professor of divinity after Traill's death in 1775.

40. Indeed Mackenzie complains about the impropriety of his not being consulted early on in the selection process. Mackenzie to Mure, 2 February 1764, 15 February 176[4], 6 March 1764, in *Caldwell papers*, pt 2, vol. i (Glasgow 1854), p.232, 171-72, 241.

41. Black to Smith, 23 January 1764; Millar to Smith, 2 February 1764, in W. R. Scott, *Adam Smith as student and professor* (Glasgow 1937), p.256-57.

42. Later Baron Porchester.

making arrangements to leave his post to become tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch).<sup>43</sup> It is not clear whom Smith eventually supported, although he did assure Mackenzie that he had promised Young only a temporary post. Whether Mackenzie abandoned Baillie, his original choice, is not known; eventually, of course, Kames's and Deskford's candidate won the day. A sixth candidate, Samuel Charters of Luscar (1742-1825),<sup>44</sup> apparently declined the chair.<sup>45</sup> Reid himself reports on none of these machinations to Andrew Skene, but we may suppose it provides the background to his report that he has been received with 'perfect civility' by the masters of the college, who 'manage their political differences with outward decency and good manners although with a good deal of intrigue and secret caballing' (letter 1).

Throughout the letters Reid adverts to infighting among his colleagues and it is clear that he found most 'disagreeable' the 'Evil Spirit of Party' afoot in the college (letter IV).<sup>46</sup> An ongoing dispute centred on the respective powers of, on the one hand, the rector, who presided over the so-called University meeting, or Senate (which consisted of the rector, faculty dean, principal, and professors), and, on the other, the principal, who chaired the College, or Faculty, meeting (which was made up of the principal and professors only), and concerned the ownership and control of college property and the administration of college revenue. Reid allied himself with the principal, William Leechman, whose college rights party was eventually victorious.

Reid's teaching day at Glasgow began at 7:30 a.m. with a public 'prelection' on moral philosophy – which for him comprised three branches: pneumatology, ethics and politics – followed by an 'hour of Examination' at eleven. During part of the term he gave a second, private, prelection at noon on 'the culture of the human mind', which included eloquence and the fine arts. His salary of £50 was amply supplemented by fees collected from his students. During his tenure at Glasgow he held a range of administrative posts, including Vice-Rector (to Edmund Burke), Quaestor (i.e. Librarian) and Clerk of the Senate, and to Andrew Skene he complains of the onerous duty of attending five or six college meetings a week. Outside the college Reid took up a number of philanthropic causes. He was one of the founders and first president of the Glasgow Society of the Sons of Ministers of the Church of Scotland, which distributed large sums of money to 'the children of ministers, sons and daughters, old and young', and whose objective was 'to bring forward well

43. Herbert to Smith, 11 September 1763, GUL MS Gen. 1035/147, f.1r.

44. Later minister of Kincardine-in-Menteith.

45. Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. ii (Edinburgh 1917), p.143.

46. Cf. Reid to Lady Kames, 24 November 1783, SRO MS GD 24/1/650, f.33r (Abercainry Muniments).

educated young men into active life'. This charity was generously endowed out of proceeds from the sale of the *Statistical account of Scotland*, in the twenty-first volume of which appeared Reid's own contribution, 'A statistical account of the University of Glasgow'.<sup>47</sup> Reid was also involved in the Humane Society of Glasgow, which provided equipment and offered rewards for water rescue operations, serving as a director in 1793.<sup>48</sup> And he actively promoted a scheme for building the Glasgow Royal Infirmary in 1786, personally subscribing £100, serving as a manager in 1793, and touring the wards and making personal donations to patients.<sup>49</sup> Such activities were of a piece with what Reid was teaching in the classroom at this time. A hitherto unnoticed set of student notes which I recently discovered in New College Library shows that Reid taught that extending charity to those in need was an enforceable part of justice no less than defending established rights to property.<sup>50</sup>

Smith's lectures on jurisprudence had attracted two Russian students and Black's lectures on chemistry brought in students from Sweden and Geneva.<sup>51</sup> Reid's lectures were as far as we know attended by students from closer to home, and the motivation of some of these may have been pragmatic as much as scholarly. The 'stupid Irish teagues', as he chooses to refer to his Irish Presbyterian pupils in letter IV, had been excluded from Anglican-dominated Trinity College, Dublin, and educated in dissenting academies, and had come to Glasgow in the hope of becoming qualified in only two or three years 'for teaching Schools or being dissenting teachers' (letter IV). English nonconformists barred from Oxford and Cambridge also made their way to Glasgow.

Despite Reid's testimony in letter VII, students and professors sometimes enjoyed an uneasy relationship in this period. Reid himself was called in to assist in the aftermath of one riot and played a role in restoring law and order

47. Leonard Dickson (ed.), *Historical sketch of the Glasgow Society of the Sons of Ministers of the Church of Scotland*, 7th edn (Glasgow 1990), p.17; *The Glasgow Mercury*, 29 March/5 April 1791, 4/11 May 1790, 22/29 November 1791, 27 December 1791/3 January 1792.

48. *The Glasgow courier*, 12 February 1793; *The Glasgow Mercury*, 28 September/5 October 1790.

49. *The Glasgow courier*, 27 March 1792, 29 March 1792, 31 March 1792, 3 April 1792, 3 January 1793, 8 January 1793, 12 February 1793, 7 January 1794; P. B. Wood, 'Thomas Reid and the Scottish Enlightenment' [exhibition catalogue] (Toronto 1985), p.17.

50. Reid scoffed at those – like Hume – who regarded justice as depending solely on public utility, and who regarded perfect rights as 'those w<sup>c</sup> are for y<sup>e</sup> good of Society', for, as he shrewdly observed, 'in this case I have a perfect right to a halfpenny yet tho it were not payed I dont think it could hurt the Society any'. Notes from 'D<sup>r</sup> Reids Lectures' on moral philosophy 1768–1769 (possibly by John Monteath (?1753–1843), who matriculated at Glasgow in 1765) (MS Box 32.3), p.135. See also R. Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Practical ethics* (Princeton 1990), p.203; *Works*, p.645b.

51. GUA MS 26650, p.77, 91.

in the wake of a couple of other disturbances, in one case taking the part of the excitable professor of natural philosophy, John Anderson, who assaulted a student who had disrupted his class.<sup>52</sup> Reid was also involved in policing the college garden, where he liked to stroll, and which was being vandalised by students.<sup>53</sup>

Although he finds much in Glasgow 'to amuse [him] in the literary way', he confesses to some disappointment in the common Glaswegians, finding them 'greatly inferior' to their Aberdonian counterparts, that is, 'Boetian in their Understandings, fanatical in their Religion, and clownish in their dress and Manners' (letter 11). He sounds somewhat oppressed by the 'gloomy Entusiastical Cast' of the place, and wonders whether to ascribe this to the 'Air and Climate' or to the misguidance of the clergy (letters 1 and 11). (In a similar vein, Robert Foulis would later blame the slow progress of his Academy on the cold climate.)<sup>54</sup> At any rate, it is to this 'tame & sober' place that Reid, his wife Elizabeth, and five of their children (Jean, Margaret, Martha, George and David) migrated sometime between 14 August<sup>55</sup> and 10 October 1764<sup>56</sup> to take up residence in a smallpox-infested street. We may gather, nonetheless, that the Reids lived in some degree of comfort, and it seems from a passage restored to letter 1 that they kept a womanservant. By 1769 Reid would manage to wangle a finer house from the College, having begun to lobby for better accommodation the year after his arrival. Upon his retirement from active teaching in 1780, Reid would keep this house in the New, or Professors', Court as a perquisite.<sup>57</sup> In the meantime, Reid appears in his letters as a man capable of adapting to new surroundings with some buoyancy of spirit; he accounts himself lucky, at any rate, that his house is 'new and free of buggs' and declares his view from the Drygate to be 'the finest prospect in Glasgow'.

### *Rudis indigestaque moles*

With this Latin tag – Ovid's characterisation of chaos<sup>58</sup> – Reid more than

52. GUA MSS 26643, p.313-16; 26644, p.53, 72, 74-75; 26690, p.141-46.

53. GUA MS 43370, cited in A. D. Boney, *The Lost gardens of Glasgow University* (London 1988), p.175.

54. Letter to Dr William Hunter, 11 November 1766, in David Murray, *Some letters of Robert Foulis* (Glasgow 1917), p.36.

55. See H. L. Ulman (ed.), *The Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society 1758-1773* (Aberdeen 1990), p.124-25.

56. The date of Reid's inaugural lecture.

57. GUA MSS 26644, p.88; 26650, p.99; 26691, p.364; *John Tait's Directory* (Glasgow 1783) (1871 facsimile edn), p.9.

58. *Metamorphoses* 1.7.



once<sup>59</sup> reflects upon the predicament of the eighteenth-century man of science. Reid's appetite for knowledge was insatiable and opportunistic; he was a man suited to his time, eager to enjoy the fruits of learning as they were cultivated everywhere around him. In letter XI Reid confesses, nonetheless, to feeling that he is attempting to contain the uncontainable. With no doubt some degree of false modesty he reports:

I have long ago found my Memory to be like a Vessel that is full; if you pour in more you lose as much as you gain; and on this Account have a thousand times resolved to give up all pretence to what is called Learning, being satisfied that it is more profitable to ruminate on the little I have laid up than to add to the indigested heap. To pour Learning into a leaky vessel is indeed a very childish & ridiculous occupation. Yet when a Man has leisure and is placed among books that are new to him it is difficult to resist the temptation.

Reid was tempted by an impressive range of subjects, and in Andrew and David Skene he found epistolary companions with whom to share his enthusiasms. Relatively little is known about the Skenes, although a character of the father is drawn in letter XI and the letters taken as a whole help to establish what details are known of the son's life. It is evident from Reid's queries that the younger Skene sustained an active correspondence with such prominent contemporary naturalists as John Ellis, Linnæus and Thomas Pennant, and was, in Reid's judgement, an able natural historian in his own right. As we shall see presently, Reid shared an interest in botany with David Skene and encouraged and supported him in his other natural science studies. David was, like Reid, a founder-member of the first Aberdeen Philosophical Society where, unlike Reid, he concurred with certain of Hume's sceptical ideas.

In a passage now restored to letter VII, Reid describes how a technique, pioneered by William Smellie (1697-1763), for rotating the head in a forceps delivery was used in the birth of his daughter.<sup>60</sup> Reid was also *au courant* with Black's doctrine of latent heat, and exerted some care in urging his friends not to broadcast this discovery lest Black not be given full credit for it (letters III and V). In his musings on the virtues of cinchona or Peruvian bark, hemlock, rhubarb and wild carrot in the full text of letters III, VIII and IX, Reid explores the meeting ground of botany and medicine.<sup>61</sup> It is fitting, then, that Reid

59. i.e. in letter XI; *Works*, p.418a; and in Reid's *curâ primâ* on common sense, where it is glossed in some depth (see D. F. Norton (ed.), Appendix, Louise Marcil-Lacoste, *Claude Buffier and Thomas Reid*, Kingston, Montreal 1982, p.205f.).

60. Smellie, *Treatise on the theory and practice of midwifery* (London 1752), p.273-74; cf. D. Skene to A. Skene, AUL MS 38, f.10r. David Skene had studied under Smellie.

61. See also Philip Miller, 'Daucus', *The Gardeners dictionary*, 8th edn (London 1768); *The Scots magazine* xxviii (May 1766), p.250-51.

should have exerted his influence to have a lectureship in *materia medica* created and to have Black's laboratory assistant, Dr William Irvine (1743-1787) – who supervised, perhaps along with Reid,<sup>62</sup> the construction of a portable furnace for David Skene – appointed to the post in 1766.<sup>63</sup> And he followed with interest the work of Linnæus, asking after the anticipated third volume of the tenth edition of the *Systema naturæ* (i.e. 'Mineralia'), which in fact was never published (letter x). Reid also took an interest in geological phenomena closer to home, as we see from letter II, where he demonstrates a familiarity with Aberdeenshire's own Bennachie porphyry. Reputedly master of Newton's *Principia* by the age of twenty, Reid had a life-long interest in that natural philosopher, espousing his 'Rules of Philosophizing' in his own natural philosophy lectures at King's College in the 1750s<sup>64</sup> and heralding his *regulæ philosophandi* as 'maxims of common sense' in his own published writings. It is not surprising, then, to find Reid describing a relatively obscure double-refraction experiment in Newton's *Opticks* in letter II.<sup>65</sup>

Reid kept his correspondents abreast of improvements made by Watt to the steam engine and discussed Dollond's refinements to the telescope. A passage now restored to letter III positively identifies a perspective machine sent to David Skene as being of Watt's design and shows that Reid had a familiarity with the construction and operation of the device to be rivalled, perhaps, only by that of the inventor himself.<sup>66</sup> This is not surprising, given Reid's mathematical predilections, especially as reflected in the long passage in his *Inquiry*, published about two years earlier, on 'the geometry of visibles'.<sup>67</sup> It is possible to conjecture that the perspective machine must have appealed to Reid, engaged as he was in the philosophical project of arresting the process of visualisation before it becomes conceptualisation, i.e. of specifying the deep geometry by which three-dimensional objects are represented to the mind's eye automatically and without reflection. The objective of arresting 'the operations of the mind' before they are determined by expectation and habituation is one that Reid carries into all of his philosophical analyses.<sup>68</sup> The perspective machine was probably as close as Reid came to finding a 'Machine [...] for analysing Ideas, Moral Sentiments, and other materials belonging to

62. Letters v and x.

63. David Murray, *Memories of the Old College of Glasgow* (Glasgow 1927), p.187.

64. AUL MS K.160, p.7, for example; cf. Robert Morgan's notes from Alexander Gerard's philosophy lectures 1758-1759 (EUL MSS Dc.5.61-62), MS Dc.5.61 (i.e. vol. i), p.6.

65. *Opticks* (n.p. 1952), p.354-59, 373; *Works*, p.97b.

66. For Watt's own description see in J. P. Muirhead, *The Life of James Watt* (London 1858), p.54-55.

67. *Works*, p.125b-160a, *passim*.

68. See *Works*, p.240b.

the fourth Kingdom', but one which he nevertheless did not fail to fiddle with (letter x). But even though Reid discovered a deep geometry in the structure of perception, he did not try to generalise this result, but seems to have remained true to his earlier verdict (i.e. in his 1748 'Essay on quantity') with regard to the inappropriateness of applying mathematical categories to moral subjects, and in particular to the discussion of virtue and merit.<sup>69</sup> But Reid's overall approach to the science of mind remained scientific, even if it was not entirely mathematical in its orientation.

Reid's efforts to wrest order out of chaos were not limited to his natural philosophy interests; the categories of science were equally applicable to objects on the mental horizon, as well as to moral and political phenomena, which depend upon the science of mind. There are scattered hints in the letters about Reid's various attempts to reduce 'Political knowledge' to a science as part of his ambition – announced in his King's College philosophical orations of 1753–1762, repeated every year at Glasgow in his introductory moral philosophy lecture, and elaborated in his 'Brief account of Aristotle's logic' (1774) – to produce a new, post-Baconian organon, one in which pneumatology, or the science of mind, ethics, and politics are each accorded the rigour of a science.<sup>70</sup> The first step in that process was to work backwards from hunches and observations to 'axioms' or 'first principles'. Thus in the summer of 1767 Reid read Sir James Steuart's *Inquiry into the principles of political oeconomy*<sup>71</sup> and heartily recommended it to David Skene as 'contain[ing] more sound principles concerning Commerce & Police than any book we have yet had' (letter xi). It is clear that Steuart is effectively being congratulated on his contribution to Reid's new organon. Steuart's interventionist principles would also have been adaptable to the humanitarian objectives suggested by Reid's lectures on jurisprudence of the same period. Even so, Reid's use of Steuart's doctrines was not uncritical, for, speaking of that author and of other 'Philosophical' writers on 'the wealth of a state' in the classroom a couple of years later, Reid observed: 'It is evident that for want of dew knowledge many errors have been committed.'<sup>72</sup>

69. There are no fewer than three drafts of the 'Essay on quantity' among Reid's papers, all bearing some variant of the following title: 'Concerning the Object of Mathematicks'. AUL MSS 2131/5/1/20, 5/1/22, 2/1/1; cf. 7/v/12. (The 2131, being common to all of the papers in the Birkwood Collection (i.e. AUL MSS 2131/1–8), is omitted from all subsequent references to material from this collection.)

70. AUL MSS 7/v/4, p.16, 6; 7/v/9, f.3v; 8/iv/5, f.1r; cf. 4/iii/3, f.1r; D. D. Todd (ed.), 'The philosophical orations of Thomas Reid', *Philosophy research archives* 3 (1977), p.938, 941–42, 948, 953.

71. London 1767.

72. Notes from Reid's lectures 1768–1769, NCL MS Box 32.3, p.217; cf. p.232.

A snapshot of the local political scene in letter IV gives us a hint as to the reactionary cast of some of Reid's political/jurisprudential principles. Here Reid shows himself to be among those who favoured a crack-down on the American colonists in the furore surrounding the passing of the Stamp Act in 1765-1766.<sup>73</sup> About four years later, in 1769 (and, it would seem, year in and year out until at least 1776), Reid would caution his students against Locke's 'absurd hypothesis' – which was a favourite of the Americans – 'that the Government has no right to touch a farthing of the subjects Money w<sup>t</sup> out their consent'.<sup>74</sup> But not all of Reid's principles were so reactionary: he freely criticised the law of entail, and thereby advocated the breakup of feudal tenures.<sup>75</sup> He also dosed his students in this period with some general reflections on Harrington's *Oceana*, including, crucially, the agrarian law,<sup>76</sup> and, late in life, applauded the radical views of land reform contained in William Ogilvie's *Essay on the right of property in land*.<sup>77</sup>

Real progress in the study of the thought (and, in particular, the political thought) of Reid has been hindered by certain misconceptions, both about the man himself and about the motivations and predispositions that informed his writings. Recent attention paid by scholars to the vast body of Reid manuscripts<sup>78</sup> has done much to dispel these myths, but not enough emphasis has been placed on the study of Reid's intellectual disposition as prerequisite to a genuine understanding of his works. I believe that a close reading of Reid's letters to the Skenes reveals the philosopher's mind at work, and thereby affords an entrée into his corpus, including the lectures on politics. The letters demonstrate that Reid combined a highly disciplined intelligence with an almost boyish curiosity about all things.<sup>79</sup> They show him to be a thoroughgoing man of science, abreast of the latest developments in medicine, chemistry, botany, natural history and optics, and familiar with contemporary practitioners in these fields. Most importantly, they reveal a man of measured judgement,

73. Lord Kames to D. Skene, 6 March 1770, NCL MS THO 2, f.33v; Reid to Kames, 27 February 1778, in Ross, 'Unpublished letters of Thomas Reid to Lord Kames, 1762-1782', p.33.

74. Notes from Reid's lectures 1768-1769, NCL MS Box 32.3, p.243-44; cf. Robert Jack's notes from Reid's moral philosophy lectures 1774-1776 (GUL MSS Gen. 116-118), MS Gen. 118, p.667: 'that a state has no right to take away a mans property for the common utility without their consent'.

75. *Practical ethics*, p.150-53, [213]-214.

76. AUL MSS 4/III/6, f.4r; 4/III/7, f.1v; cf. *Practical ethics*, p.207.

77. Aberdeen 1781. Reid to Ogilvie, 7 April 1789, in MacDonald, p.151-52. Ogilvie is mentioned in letter III in connection with Black's chemistry lectures.

78. The great majority of which are in the Birkwood Collection.

79. This quality was described by the physician who attended Reid in his last illness ([Robert Cleghorn], *Sketch of the character of the late Thomas Reid*, Glasgow 1796, p.5).

or, as Reid would have it, of common sense.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, in these letters 'Cadgers are ay speaking of Crooksadles' (letter VII), that is, indulging in a good deal of shop talk, and in so doing afford us a rewarding insight into Reid the scientist.

### Schedule of restored passages and corrections

In the *verbatim et literatim* transcriptions of Reid's text in this schedule the following principles have been employed. Spelling, capitalisation, punctuation, and paragraphing all follow Reid. (Paragraphs, however, are sometimes indicated in Reid's text by extra space between sentences rather than by the start of a new line, indented or otherwise.) False starts or slips of the pen of a minor nature which have been overwritten or corrected by means of an inserted letter are not recorded. Catchwords and inadvertent repetitions have been enclosed in {braces}. Interlinear material is given in [half brackets]. Conjectural readings of illegible, obscured, or damaged parts of the MSS have been enclosed in <angle brackets>. No attempt has been made here to represent material written on the letter covers or to reproduce Hamilton's editorial notations on Reid's MSS. Page, column and line references to Hamilton's text are given in the left-hand column, while corrections to and material deleted from Hamilton's text are supplied in the right-hand column according to the following model: Hamilton's edition] Reid's text.

Letter I	2 fos, 2v cover, 32.5 × 19.8 cm
40a.25	are different so far] are different as far
40b.18	David was seized] David after some weeks loosness which reduced him was seized
40b.21	his mother.] his mother. D <sup>r</sup> Black saw him sometimes & D <sup>r</sup> Hamilton very often.

They both agreed in an opinion which I apprehend showed both Judgment and Honesty & that was that the best thing they could do for him was to do nothing at all, because every thing seemed to go on regularly. He has had no second fever altho' it is now the 19<sup>th</sup> day, so that I think he is out of danger he got one dose of physic and has been a little loose ever since. But he is sometimes very troublesome & capricious sometimes making his Woman rise in the middle of the night to make pottage to him.

M<sup>rs</sup> Reid wrote you when she was in very low Spirits by a

80. *Works*, p.421b.



- Dissentery accompanying the Natural Evacuation of the Sex.  
She had something of the same kind about a month after. But I  
think upon the whole she has had such interchanges of health  
and ailments of low Spirits and good Spirits as she was wont to  
have.
- 4ob.44 sometimes [turning] round] sometimes [*MS torn*] round  
4ob.45 our [country] people] ou<r> [*MS torn*] people
- 
- Letter II 2 fos, 4v cover, 20.5 × 16.1 cm
- 41a.36 on various parts] in various parts  
41a.37 Carburi says] Carburi say [*H's note is incorrect; R is in fact  
referring neither to Count Marino nor to Count Marco, but to a  
third Count Carburi, namely, Jean-Baptiste (d. 1801), who was  
nevertheless associated with the more famous Count Marino Carburi,  
having contributed an appendix to a book written by him.*]
- 41b.14 Brazil pebble] brazil peeble  
41b.15 distinct speculums] distinct spectrums  
41b.35 the literary world] the literary wa<y>
- 
- Letter III 2 fos, 6v containing notations not in R's hand, 32.6 × 19.8 cm
- 42a.21 wrapt up in paper] wrapt up a paper  
42a.26 on that account much fitter] on that Account 2 sh dearer. The  
last takes the temperature of any fluid much sooner, & is on that  
Account much fitter  
42a.38 the first proper opportunity.] the first proper Opportunity. I  
was obliged to send it in two parcels; one consisting of the three  
white Iron feet, one within another, closed at top with the plug  
of the largest foot, & bound over with paper. The other parcel  
contains the Machine itself. in a green cloth bag, which with  
the two other plugs is put in to a white iron case bound up in  
gray paper and directed to you.
- When the Machine is taken out of the bag, you will see that  
it consists of a Mahogany box clasped. Opening it while the  
clasps are on the under side, you will find the apparatus within  
it together with a printed paper of directions for setting it up  
and using it. I wish the directions were more distinct; but the  
Author, seems to have  $\wedge$ [a] better talent for invention than for  
description. The Mahogany box when spread out serves for the  
drawing board which stands perpendicular to the horizon when

it is used, with that side downward which hase [*sic*] the Mortoise holes in it. There are four Springs at the four Corners for fixing the paper on which you draw, tight to the board. The board is kept Spread by skrewing on the two plugs which receive the two smaller feet, with two Skrews which you will find in the Machine. The third plug which receives the largest foot is skrewed tight upon the T which you will see fixed in the Machine

The rest of the Apparatus consists of a parallelogram piece, an Index, & an Eye piece

The parallelogram piece has two Ends shod with brass which you push into the two mortoise holes in the under side of the board. There are {are} two catches with springs in the innersides of the board which fix these ends when they are pushed far enough. And when you take off the piece again by pulling the ends out of the mortoise holes, you must take care to raise the catch with your finger. The Eye piece consists of several joynts, by which while one end of it is fixed within the box in the manner you find it, the second joynt is brought over the upper side of the board, & by means of the remaining joynts, the perforated brass plate at the other End is brought to the place of the eye, or what in the terms of art is called the point of View.

The Perspective plain, is an imaginary Rectangle, equal to the board, and placed above the board so as that the upperside of the board and the lower side of the perspective plain do coincide.

The Index has at the lower end a brass plate fixed across which joyns it to the lowest side of the parallelogram piece. This plate has a skrew hole in the middle, into which is skrewed the hose of the pencil. The pencil must be thrust into this hose so that its point reaches about a twentieth part of an inch beyond the hose. The length of the Index is equal to the breadth of the board and it ends above in a bra<ss> point. You will easily see by the construction of the parallelogram piece, that the penc<il> when fixed to it can easily be carried over the whole board; and that as you describe any figu<re> whatsoever upon the paper applied to the board, the upper end of the Index describes a figure in the imaginary perspective plain, exactly similar and equal. And therefore when you apply your eye to the point of

view, and keeping the Eye in that place, survey your Object through the small hole in the brass plate of the Eye piece; if you apply your Right hand to the pencil, and carry it over the board so that the point of the Index touches the out line of the Object in the perspective plain; your pencil draws a similar out line upon the paper on the board. The stroke of the pencil ought to be as slight as possible; and it is proper to keep the paper always close to the board by the left hand. It requires practice to do an outline by this Machine tollerably neat and handsom, but it must be exact & accordin<sup>g</sup> to the rules of Perspective. I have seen the Machine used for taking off a smal Map from a large one. You will easily see that this is done by making the large Map the Object and the small one the perspective draught of that Object. I have also seen drawings of busts and Statues taken by it. The price including the Witeiron case is £3.6.0 the circular Thermometer £0.10.6 the other £0.12.6. Which you may pay to D. Bartlet.

42b.11	of this kind] of that kind
42b.13-14	three-parts fire-sand] three parts fine Sand
42b.31-32	as far as I see] as far I see
42b.40	so far as] as far as
42b.46	put it in the box] put in the box
42b.58-59	double ours] double of ours

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Letter IV      2 fos, 8v cover, 20.4 × 16.0 cm

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43a.46	how many people] how people
43b.6	than was the last] then was the last
43b.64	<i>Dec.</i> 30, 1765.] <i>Dec<sup>r</sup></i> 30 1765 I wish you many happy years

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Letter v      2 fos, 20.5 × 16.2 cm

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44a.19	affects me deeply] afflicts me deeply
44a.22	cannot but give you] cannot but give me
44a.22-23	You know his worth] You knew his worth
44b.29	can wholly be] can be wholly
45a.6-7	Thus, if a pound of water of 40° be mixed] Thus a pound of Water 40 <sup>deg</sup> mixed
45a.7-8	the mixed is found] the Mixt is found [ <i>R no doubt means 'mixture'.</i> ]

*The rediscovered letters of Thomas Reid to Drs Andrew and David Skene*

Letter VI	1 fo., 25v cover, 32.3 × 20.1 cm
45b.41-42	The chemical class this session might bring] The Chemical Class this Session I conceive might bring
45b.46-47	£20, and give] 20 £ or give
45b.53	leave him but little time] leave him litte time
45b.54	his chemical discourses] his Chemical Discoveries
46a.37-38	the man – that is, next to you] the Man that next to you
46a.40	determined more by the public good] determined more b⟨y⟩ [MS torn] publick Good

Letter VII	2 fos, 12v cover, 20.1 × 15.7 cm
46a.47-48	anything in it I ought to answer] any thing in it that I ought to answer
46a.55	is in a good way.] is in a good way. D <sup>r</sup> Hamilton our Professor of Anatomy was Operator. I believe he is excellent in Midwifery, though one would not be apt to think that you and he should both excell in it as you differ so much from one another. He is a Man about the Size of the late W. Johnston the Pewterer, a lazy indolent Mortal, & when he is well set down is not easily raised. but good Nature & skill in his Profession as a Surgeon Anatomist and Man Midwife cover all his infirmities.
46b.3	all that we do] all that we can do
46b.16	the duties of his office] the duty of his office
46b.40	have an ebb and flow] have an ebb & a flow
46b.63	honour the magistrates] Honour which the Magistrates
47a.1	I like the honour better than the office] I like the honour more than the Office⟨.⟩

We are all well if M<sup>rs</sup> Reid was well, she is perfectly quiet & sweat⟨s⟩ plentifully. M<sup>r</sup> Hamilton told me he was obliged to use Forceps on account of the weakness of her Pains & a wrong position of the Chi⟨ld⟩ the face being turned to the Os Pubis. But it does not appear that the child has got the least hurt.

47a.6 eleven at night] eleven at night

May 14th

I missed the opportunity of sending this and the Thermometer by M<sup>r</sup> Duguid. M<sup>rs</sup> Reids recovery has been but very slow. She got little sleep for several Nights and continued very weak but she rested well last night & is greatly relieved. Little Bess is very well, and very civil, she sucked sturdily before she

was twelve hours old and seems to have no resentment of the rough manner in which she was introduced into the world.

Letter VIII      2 fos, 13<sup>r</sup> cover, 14<sup>v</sup> blank, 18.4 × 14.7 cm

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47a.9      ellipsis] Dear Sir

I received yours with the thermometer and £0.12.6 from M<sup>r</sup> Cruden. I wish you had not sent the money for I cannot get the thermometer repaired for some time. D<sup>r</sup> Wilson who is the only man that makes them, is gone to London and is not expected home before the Month of October, & I dont know any other that can be trusted with the repairing it. I hope to have the pleasure of seing you about the beginning of August & M<sup>rs</sup> Reid intends to come along with me. M<sup>rs</sup> Reid had yesterday a severe fit of the bilious disorder in her Stomach. D<sup>r</sup> Black has recommended to her Hemlock leaves in powder to be taken when she is well, but you know she never takes medicines when she is well. Jeannie has likewise been distressed for a fortnight with her headach and sore Eyes, but she is now recovered. Pattie is at Ed<sup>r</sup> with my Sister. I believe I shall take Ed<sup>r</sup> in my way to Abd<sup>n</sup> &. if you have any commissions here or there that I can execute I beg you will employ me.

47a.30      our surgeons eclipse] our Surgeons rather ecclipse

Letter IX      2 fos, 16<sup>r</sup> cover, 16<sup>v</sup> blank, 18.2 × 14.8 cm

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47a.46      ellipsis] D<sup>r</sup> S<sup>r</sup>

I long to write you & to hear from you, & tho this must be short & hurried for want of time I resolved not to slip this opportunity. I sent your Thermometer repaired about three or for weeks ago by Capt Burnet. Jamie Burnets Son who was so kind as {as} to see us in his passage from Ireland to Aberdeen He was to be a week or two at Ed<sup>r</sup>, however I hope before this time you have received the thermometer from him. We have had a long trait of bad weather here, & colds and sore throats have been epidemical several children have died of a mortification in the throat which was past cure before it was observed. Where it has been taken in time the bark has been found of great Use. Most of my family have had sore throats but in a slight degree. more inflamed than last session.] more enflamed than last Session.

47b.5



*The rediscovered letters of Thomas Reid to Drs Andrew and David Skene*

M<sup>rs</sup> Reid begs to be remembred to you kindly & blames her self for not writing you before now. Be so good when you see D<sup>r</sup> Burnet to make our kind Compliments to h<im> and to M<sup>rs</sup> Burnet.

Letter x	2 fos, 18r cover, 18v blank, 22.8 × 18.7 cm
48a.19	as often as] so often as
48a.23	might have been construed] might have been constructed
48a.31	time to write.] time to write.
	<p>M<sup>rs</sup> Reid &amp; the rest of my family joyn with me in their Respects to your {to your} Papa your Sisters &amp; George. M<sup>rs</sup> Reid is very tender and most of the young folks have had colds or other ailments since the Snow went off The cold here when greatest I am told was at eleven degrees of farenheits thermometer this answers to 8 degrees in the Country for there is commonly three degrees of odds. M<sup>rs</sup> Reid wants to have her young Daughter inoculated, and we have not the small pox in this Neighbourhood just now&lt;.&gt; If there is good matter to be got with you, could you send a little of it with M<sup>r</sup> Duguid the bearer of this at his return. Do in this as you judge reasonable.</p> <p>I am Dear Sir</p> <p>Yours most affectionately</p> <p>Tho Reid</p>
Letter xi	2 fos, 20v containing notations not in R's hand, 23.3 × 18.3 cm
48a.35	It gives me] It gave me
48a.44	with him in that entire confidence] with him, with that entire confidence
48b.17	respect and sympathy.] Respect and Sympathy. We have most of us had ailments that go by the Name of the Influenza: and indeed few here have escaped it; but the Symptoms in different persons have been so various that I cannot describe them Intermitting headaches, and Sweatings have I think been the most general Symptoms.
48b.41	childish and ridiculous imagination] childish & ridiculous occupation
48b.56-57	which grew on rotten wood in pure water] which grew on rotten Wood int<o> pure water
49a.6-7	the reason of my observing] the occasion of my observing

49a.35	with spirit. I am] with Spirit, & I am
Letter XII	2 fos, 21v-22r blank, 22v cover, 30.2 × 16.4 cm
49b.2	for that purpose] for this purpose
49b.6	You were] You was
49b.15	such a crop] such a Cropt
Letter XIII	2 fos, 24r cover, 24v blank, 22.5 × 18.1 cm
49b.25	[July 1770]] July 70 [ <i>not in R's hand</i> ]
49b.47-48	you know we moralists] you know that we Moralists
50b.3	indulge me with the pleasure] indulge me the pleasure

## Appendix

MSS not described in the text of this article are as follows: five letters from Lord Kames to D. Skene;<sup>81</sup> nine letters to D. Skene from the naturalist Thomas Pennant (1726-1798),<sup>82</sup> who was then completing his tour of Scotland and preparing his observations for the press; one letter from George Campbell to D. Skene;<sup>83</sup> one letter from Lord Deskford to A. Skene;<sup>84</sup> one letter from the first professor of anatomy at Edinburgh University, Alexander Monro, primus (1697-1767), to D. Skene;<sup>85</sup> one letter from the minister of Moffat (and later professor of natural history at Edinburgh), John Walker (1731-1803), to David Skene;<sup>86</sup> one unsigned letter to the episcopal minister of Banff, Charles Cordiner (?1746-1794);<sup>87</sup> one letter from David Steuart Erskine (11th Earl of Buchan; 1742-1829), to D. Skene;<sup>88</sup> six drafts of letters from D. Skene (in his

81. Letter 1: Edinburgh, 1 December 1766, f.26r-v. Letter 2: Edinburgh, 17 March 1767, f.27r-28v. Letter 3: Blair Drummond, 14 April 1767, 29v-30v. Letter 4: Blair Drummond, 11 January 1769, 31r-32v. Letter 5: Edinburgh, 6 March 1770, 33r-34v. (Handwritten copy of letter 1: AUL MS 483, f.75-76.)

82. Letter 1: Slains, 10 August 1769, f.35r-v. Letter 2: Edinburgh, 13 September 1769, f.36r-37v. Letter 3: Downing, 10 November 1769, 38r-39v, f.39v containing a draft of Skene's reply. Letter 4: Downing, 7 January 1770, f.40r-41v. Letter 5: London, 5 March 1770, 42r-43v. Letter 6: Downing, 7 April 1770, 44r-45v. Letter 7: Downing, 22 May 1770, 46r-47v. Letter 8: Downing, 12 August 1770, 48r-49v. Letter 9: Downing, 5 October 1770, 50r-51v. (Handwritten copies of letters 1-9: AUL MS 483, 56-71.) A letter addressed to Skene dated London, 23 October 1770 concerning Pennant follows at f.52r-v.

83. Whitehouse, 1 August 1770, f.53-54.

84. Cullen House, 16 January 1762, 55r-56v.

85. Edinburgh, 15 July 1758, 57r-58v.

86. Moffat, 14 April 1770, 59v-60r. (Handwritten copy: AUL MS 483, f.48-52.)

87. Fordyce, 9 August 1777, 61r-62v.

88. Middleton, 12 May 1770, f.63r-v. (Handwritten copy: AUL MS 483, f.46.)

own hand) to various people, including one to the professor of botany and materia medica at Edinburgh, John Hope (1725-1786),<sup>89</sup> one to Kames,<sup>90</sup> one to Deskford,<sup>91</sup> one which is unaddressed,<sup>92</sup> and two to the naturalist John Ellis (?1710-1776);<sup>93</sup> two further items by D. Skene;<sup>94</sup> an unidentified paper apparently addressed to A. Skene;<sup>95</sup> and seven additional items,<sup>96</sup> including five papers all marked with some variant of the following note: 'Found among D<sup>r</sup>. Hamilton's papers from Eastfield'.<sup>97</sup>

### Abbreviations used in the notes

AUL	Aberdeen University Library
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
GUA	Glasgow University Archives
GUL	Glasgow University Library
NCL	New College Library, University of Edinburgh
SRO	Scottish Record Office

89. 27 April 1764, 64r.

90. Aberdeen, 3 December 1765, 64r.

91. undated, f.64v.

92. Aberdeen, 21 March 1765, 64v.

93. The first: Aberdeen, 15 April 1765, 65r. The second: 16 May 1765, 65v.

94. The first, dated 23 April 1753, is a statement of 'the proper rules [he] ought to observe with regard to [his] business and conduct' and comprises f.66r-67v; the second, undated, contains a list of 'Regulations for spending [his] Time' and comprises f.68r-v. (Handwritten copies: AUL MS 483, f.17-19, 53-54.)

95. f.75r-v.

96. f.76r-86v.

97. f.81v, 82v, 83v, 85r, 86r. Dr Hamilton of Eastfield was probably Alexander Thomson of Banchory's third cousin, the Edinburgh physician James Hamilton the elder (1749-1835).

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<sup>1</sup>Excluding correspondence contained in the Birkwood Collection and other correspondence described in my article, "'Cadgers are ay speaking of Crooksadles': The Rediscovered Letters of Thomas Reid to Drs Andrew and David Skene," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 314 (1993): 207–229 (attached), and including letters that have appeared in print.



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